Let's Go!

An Epic of Youth and War

by **Louis Felix Ranlett**

Formerly 2d Lieutenant of Infantry, 2d Division, A.E.F.

$2.50

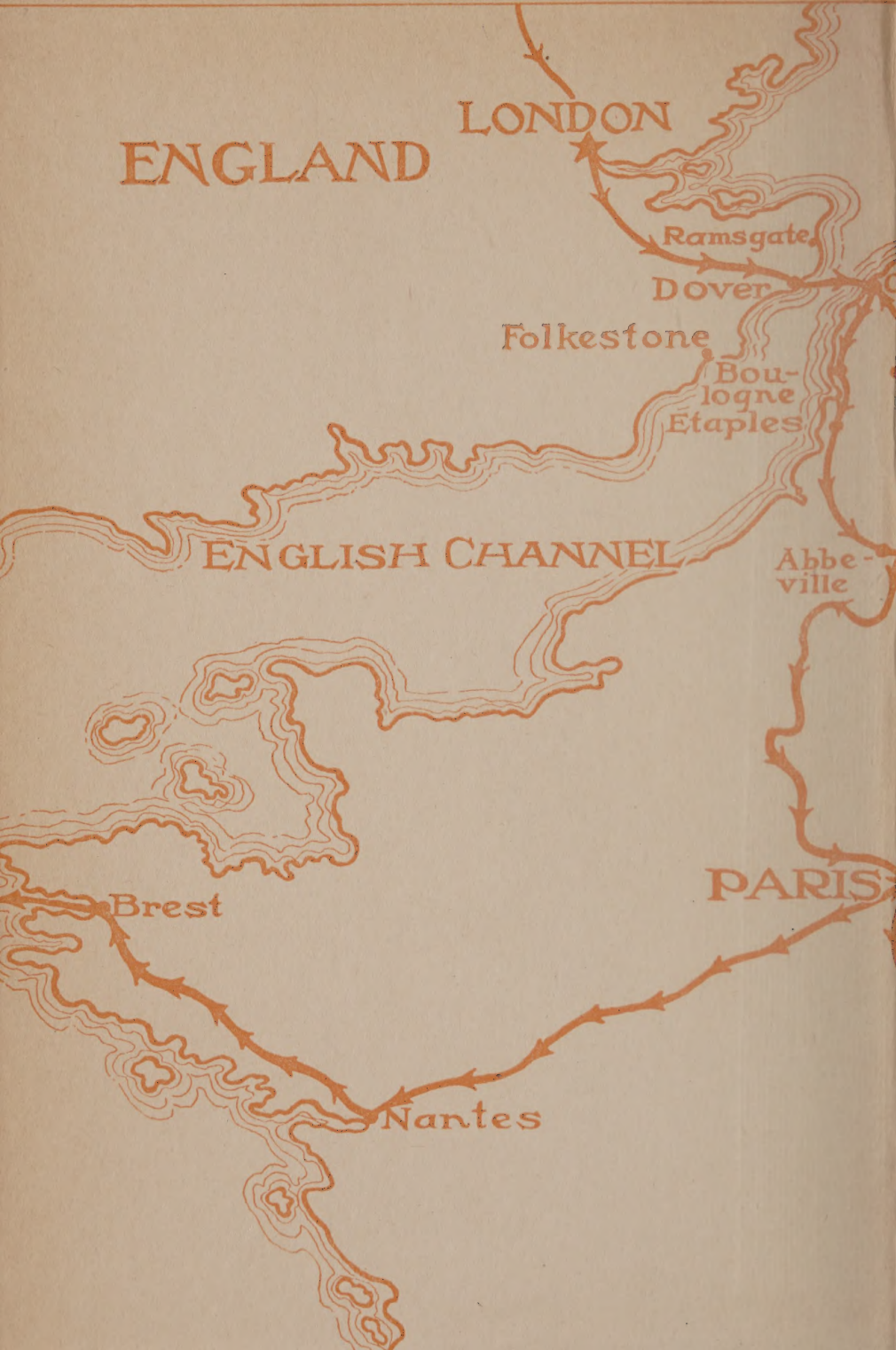
LET'S GO!

By Louis Felix Ranlett

THE author of 'Let's Go!' was a freshman in the fall of 1917. Twelve days after Christmas he had enlisted. Early in the following April he went to the 2d Division as a Second Lieutenant of Infantry. In October he was cited for bravery. Five months later he was discharged as 40 per cent disabled.

Ranlett's book is a fascinating narrative, humorous, sane, human. He had no grouch, but took things as they came. He tells his story just as he would have told it a day or two after the events took place. His book is an epic of youth and war — vivid, thrilling, and true.

Let's Go!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BOMB-PROOF BILLETS AND CHOW IN NEUFMAISONS

LET'S GO!

THE STORY OF A.S. NO. 2448602

BY

LOUIS FELIX RANLETT

Sometime Corporal, Company B, 308th Infantry of the 77th Division A.E.F. and Second Lieutenant, 23d Infantry of the 2d Division A.E.F.

WITH ILLUSTRATIONS

BOSTON AND NEW YORK
HOUGHTON MIFFLIN COMPANY
The Riverside Press Cambridge
1927

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The Riverside Press
CAMBRIDGE · MASSACHUSETTS
PRINTED IN THE U.S.A.

TO
MY FATHER AND MOTHER
WHO LET ME GO

AN EXPLANATION

'THE boys won't talk about the war.' That is not true. But it is true that the boys do not talk about the war. The reason is not because the war is something not to be thought of. The boys would talk if the questioners would listen. But the questioners do not. They at once interrupt with 'It's all too dreadful'; or, 'Doesn't it seem like a terrible dream?' or, 'How can you think of it?' or, 'I can't imagine such things.' That is as bad as telling a humorist you've heard that one before. It shuts the boys up.

But a writer is less sensitive than a speaker. I have not been discouraged. This is my story of what I saw of the war. In it you will find more sunshine than you do mud. The war was not all a terrible dream, nor were the terrible parts a dream.

Part of the story was written within two years of the end of the war; the remainder, at intervals during the past two years. Throughout I have told how I thought and felt at the time that the events were taking place. I was twenty-one then. I have been careful to avoid the intrusion of afterthoughts. I have not explained things that I did not understand when they happened. My enthusiasms, my dislikes, my dreams, my mistakes are here uncorrected. Places and people are given their true names, or the names I remember, which may not be the true ones.

From the collection of U.S. official drawings that is on exhibition in the National Museum in Washington, D.C., I have selected sixteen that illustrate my

experiences to a nicety. These drawings, which are here reproduced by authority, are by Captains Harvey Dunn, George Harding, Wallace Morgan, Ernest Peixotto, J. André Smith, and Harry Townsend.

FAIRHAVEN, MASSACHUSETTS
June, 1927

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The illustrations are from official drawings of the U.S.A. Signal Corps

LET'S GO!

LET'S GO!

CHAPTER I

DOWN TO 'N' DECK

THE jaunty drumbeats of the funeral march, accompanied by the peculiar peeping of fifes, sounded in the company street so loudly that they were heard even above the bustle of the large upper squad-room. 'Last night I met a friend in the Third Company who said he had seen a reporter from the "New York Journal" who told him that the camp ——' One of the men next the window bit off his sentence just before its climax, and, throwing up the window, stuck his head out to see what the racket was about. Others turned from their tasks and looked too. Smiles spread gradually over their faces. As the smiles widened, conversation stopped, a momentary contagion of silence swept over the room, all tasks were dropped, and in an instant the owners of the beds nearest the windows were shouting that they 'should worry' if the crowd *did* break their beds, they wouldn't have to sleep in them again. Every window was jammed to its capacity.

Camp Upton was gazing for the last time upon General Rumor. His funeral procession was just rounding the corner of barracks, number 220 Fourteenth Street, into the parade ground, called 'company street,' in the rear. At the head came a drummer and two fifers playing the funeral march 'with a rag.' Behind them

solemnly minced several high priests robed in flowing dark blue blankets, inverted campaign hats held upon their heads by nose straps, raising in their hands the sacred brooms, the tools which had been second only in importance to the shoe brush in the lives of the mourners. Behind them trooped many other dark-robed figures carrying varying symbols of their army trade, and, most important of all, the bier on which the General lay. The shoulders of the bearers sustained an old reliable cot, on the O.D.-covered (olive drab) mattress of which bounced the blanket-shrouded 'corpse.' The tune of the march changed, the figure rolled and bounced more violently, shouts of laughter burst from every observing window, crowds poured from the barracks doors and whisked into a lockstep behind the bier.

The procession turned and circled out of sight, but the music still sounded and it was not long before the retinue was back again. As the head of the column re-entered the mud-brown street of frozen footprints, the retainers of one company burst into song:

Oh! the Second Company is going higher,
They're going higher than an aviation flier.
Just look their work over and you can see
They're going to beat both Companies One and Three.
They can beat them when it comes to digging trenches,
They can beat them in any other way —
For the boys of the Second
Are always full of pep;
They set the pace
And the others can't keep step.
So, the Second Company is going higher,
They're going up, going up, every day.

The strains of 'They're Wearing 'Em Higher in Hawaii,' to which this was sung, were drowned out by

the artillery's 'Hi, hi, he, the Field Artillerie-e-e,' and that, in an instant, by other songs, as the priests halted and parted before the orderly-room window and the bier jogged through the lines of upraised brooms. Silence came as it was set down. A firing squad took its place and, at the command of its corporal, simulated the firing of a volley. 'Taps' was sounded by the buglers. The corpse cast off its shroud and leapt into the air, the mourners uttered a wild whoop, grabbed the bed, picked up the ends of their robes, and, like a crowd of women running for a train, dashed madly toward their home barracks.

The squad-room immediately became the scene of active confusion again. Every man, except the rare and unearthly few who had prepared for every emergency, resumed work as if he were getting dressed for a midnight fire; some were sewing on buttons; some checking lists of equipment to be returned; some greasing rifles; some sweeping; some folding blankets; some writing letters at furious speed; and many emptying and repacking, emptying and repacking inadequate blue denim barracks bags. There was just barely enough time, as is always the case; the call to 'fall in,' which the cadet officer of the day bellowed from the stairs, found the last of the sweepings flying under the stove, the last of the contents of the barracks bags hurriedly jammed in where a month of Sundays of systematic effort could never have made room for them.

Near the spot where the General had but recently been buried, the company lined up with a rush for the last time. No sooner was the dress complete than off they marched and wedged themselves into the assembly, which was formed at the foot of a small slope, from the upper vantage-point of which the Senior

Instructor of the Third Officers' Training School at Camp Upton, New York, was to deliver his farewell address. As that exalted personage, Captain Adler, stepped upon the raised drill-leader's platform, anxious silence waited on his words. In brief sentences he snapped out his remarks, something in this manner: 'Pretty cold day. Won't keep you long. Snow, mud, rain — lots of difficulties at this School. Pretty easy, though, for a war. No reason why you shouldn't all have made good. School's over now for most of you. Means that you'll have to begin to work. Hope you've had a pleasant stay here. . . . Names of the organizations will be called out now. Three Hundred and Fifth Infantry on the right, near Thirteenth Street. Go to places when called.'

The silence which followed was one of crushed surprise. It was as if the high-school valedictorian had said, 'I'm glad we're through,' and let it go at that.

The adjutant began to call off the designations of the organizations composing the Seventy-Seventh Division. As each was heard, a little shiver of movement passed over the crowd; hands were shaken hurriedly; cries of 'Good-bye, old man. Be good!' were heard everywhere; and a small new unit formed in the avenue behind the assembly. 'Three Hundred and Eighth Infantry' came my call at last. I broke away, severing as I went many a brief but pleasant friendship, and lined up in my new place.

Thus, as far as I was concerned, ended the Third Officers' School and then and there my visions of the glittering bars of a second lieutenant were put aside. During the next four months they were recalled but rarely. I was too busy to care for them.

In December, 1917, the War Department had announced a third series of Officers' Training Schools to continue the work of the first and second camps at Plattsburg and other posts. These Schools were to be held at the National Army cantonments and were to instruct chiefly a quota of men selected from the units in the various camps or from the personnel of the Departments in which they were located. Certain educational institutions of college grade were permitted to send small quotas of students who had successfully completed some of the military courses in their curriculum. Under this ruling Harvard University was allowed to select fifty-six men, but actually chose only fifty-one, among which number I was fortunate enough to secure a place as the sole representative of the class of 1921, then in its freshman year. The Harvard quota, probably to get them away from home — as an assignment to Camp Devens would not have done in a good many cases — was ordered to report at Camp Upton on January 5, 1918.

The School was divided into three full companies and a negro detachment of infantry, and two batteries of artillery. Intensive training under adverse weather conditions, ranging from the nose-freezing air of below-zero days to the rain and deep mud of pre-season thaws, occupied the next two and one half months. About the middle of March, just as the German offensive began to throw its long shadow of fear over the whole Allied world, it was rumored that the Seventy-Seventh Division — the 'Metropolitan Division' — was to go overseas, and that in consequence the School would break up. A hundred times a day new variations of the story were circulated; work slackened; life became one perpetual question. Finally the fate of the

School was made known. The members of the division were ordered back to their organizations; most of the ex-college students were assigned to various outfits in the division; no commissions were granted at the time, for indeed none had been definitely promised; General Rumor was dead; and but a remnant of the School remained to finish the remaining month of its course.

The regimental sergeant-major marched the 308th Infantry detachment away, and as I stepped along I felt that now for the first time I was really entering into army life; that now for the first time I was really putting aside the tasks of the student for the duties of the man. No longer would my superiors say to me, in the terms of the time-honored 'Small Problems in Infantry Tactics': 'You are Sergeant Hill. You are ordered to take eight men and perform a reconnaissance against the Blue Army located at crossroads 303, near Gettysburg. What would you do?' Now they had simply to tell me what I should do, and I, because it must be done, had, simply — or not — to do it. A thrill of satisfaction passed over me; at last I was going to become a part of an organization which was trained to fight, not merely to teach others to fight.

Before the red-and-yellow-painted elegance of the headquarters of the regiment which called itself 'New York's Own,' because it had been recruited chiefly from the big city, the little group broke up and its members hurried off to rejoin their old companies, or if, like me, they were newly assigned, to see what reception was awaiting them.

The five returned non-commissioned officers of

Company 'B' entered the orderly-room. Private, 1st Class, Ranlett waited in the hallway, affording the guards much amusement as he gradually exhausted all the reading matter upon the bulletin board and completed a careful examination of the cracks in floor, walls, and ceiling.

Just as I was about to produce the contents of my pockets in futile search for further material to occupy my mind, the orderly-room door opened and one of the returned sergeants stepped out and spoke to me, introducing himself as Burr D. Straight, who had been in my company at the School, but with whom I had not until then become acquainted. Together we entered the room, where I met the officers of the company and discussed for a few moments the strange difference between the Plattsburg Camps of which they had been graduates, and the Third School which had just expired. The friendly conversation over, I was assigned to the fourth platoon and told that I should act as corporal. This completed my transfer from the Regular Army, in which I had enlisted at the School 'for the duration of the present emergency,' to the National Army.

With Straight I went to a neighboring barracks, part of which was used by Company 'B,' and at once secured a cot. As the old members of the platoon crowded around to welcome their restored platoon sergeant and to meet their new member, and as we worked together arranging our bunks and putting our new equipment in order, I gradually became acquainted with the man who proved to be one of the best friends I ever had or hope to have. Cheerful, hard-working, solicitous for the welfare of all, Straight, a former high-school principal and Columbia Master

of Arts — leader here as everywhere he went — was the admired friend of all who knew him.

During the next few days I entered into the wild rush of preparation for the trip overseas. The second squad of the platoon fell to my lot. I hunted up the men with much mispronouncing of names, and became acquainted. They, like most of the rest of the company, had been in the army less than a month. The former personnel of the company had but recently been whisked away in large numbers. For eight hours daily we drilled, and hiked, and rolled packs; for four we drew, numbered, and tried on new equipment; for four we ate our last pies and made our farewell visits; and during the remaining eight we slept. A dance at the Knights of Columbus Hall surged pathetically with forced enthusiasm as the guests tried bravely to make the most of their moments together and to forget that those moments might perhaps be the last for a 'long, long, time.' At all times relatives of the men were seen searching for them about camp; family groups formed on the barracks steps at every moment of leisure; New York knew well that its 'Own' was soon to leave it.

On Tuesday the order recommending most of the graduates of the School for commissions made a break in the grind; the entertainment of my parents in Camp on Saturday, and on Sunday a trip to New York to say them good-bye, made another.

On Friday, the 5th of April, ten days after the closing of the School, the order for the final cleaning out of the barracks came. The tight-stuffed blue bags were piled in the company streets and shipped away; packs were rolled. Squads were detailed to destroy everything not the property of the Government, then re-

maining in the buildings. Pictures were ruthlessly torn from the walls, books, civilian clothes, boxes, and packages, valuable or worthless, were all seized and burned, though many a hard word was spoken as the cherished but non-portable stuff perished. The last sweeping was completed just as it became dark; the yard was raked; the windows were nailed up.

Guards were posted so that no one might leave the barracks, but the neighboring Y.M.C.A. huts were nevertheless packed with men striving to put through their farewell telephone calls. Sleep on the now uncovered beds was impossible; all the fires but one were out; the night commenced to pass with frigid slowness. At one o'clock a new assignment of men, noticed by no one but the supply sergeant who had expected them, arrived from Camp Devens. At five o'clock the next morning the company fell in facing the east, where the sun was just beginning to light the clouds. The stillness of the hour was broken only by the rattle of bayonet scabbards as Company 'A' moved off ahead of us. Then came the captain's harsh command, that searched the waiting line and swung it into action; we stepped out slowly, at last — no, already — on our way to France.

The crowded ferry-boat, which had embarked a full battalion of the 308th infantry from the Camp Upton train at a dock in Brooklyn, reached a pier on the west side of Manhattan only when it seemed to me as if my shoulders could no longer hold up my pack. Action was a welcome relief, so that Corporal Ranlett and his squad jounced down the gangplank at a pace which gave the directing officers not the slightest excuse for their automatic cry of 'Show some life.'

The single column, of which I was a part, wound among the piles of baggage for an interminable distance through the roofed-in twilight of a great pier-warehouse, until at last it seemed, like a file of ants entering its hole, to terminate in a small opening in the rivet-pimpled side of the Red Star liner Lapland whose upper works rose out of sight above the roof. But when I at last reached the gangplank, shouted my name and A.S. (army serial) number to the compiler of a passenger check list, and stepped through the side of the ship, I saw the line moving on unbroken as before. From where it entered at 'I' deck, it wound downwards over flights of gradually narrowing iron stairs, until 'N' deck, the lowest which the vessel boasted, was reached.

Once having landed us there, the system which had dogged our every step so far, seemed to desert us, leaving us free to do anything we would, only confining our operations strictly to the ship. Packs were dropped on hurriedly selected bunks and each man dashed away from the subterranean hole, to explore the vessel.

My chief want, after once seeing my sleeping-quarters, was to get all the air I could while I could. Four double flights of stairs brought me to the lowest open deck, which I found covered with great numbers of soldiers, just milling round. Every capstan, bit, mast, rope, or donkey-engine was being minutely inspected, but as these features of the scene were not so novel to me as the scene as a whole, I quickly found a way to the top of the pilot-house, which, being the highest accessible point, afforded an excellent view.

My position was shared by several other men. We were at the apex of a teeming mass of brown-clad figures which covered everything below us. The lifeboats, swung out over the sides, teetered on the davits

as men lurched about in them; it seemed as if the rails would be inadequate to support the multitude of figures leaning upon them; the lower shrouds were outlined in men; the deck engines were covered with seated figures; each successive deck sent up a Babel of voices from its thronging occupants. In contrast to the aimless agitation of the whole crowd, parts of which seemed to shift quickly like ants on the surface of a giant anthill, was the energetic movement of a group of workers who were unloading blue-denim barracks bags from a derrick net which, at one-minute intervals, snapped quickly up from the dock.

To the rear several ferry-boats could be seen disgorging lines of pack-stooped troops, and in the river beyond, more brown-massed, quick-slipping, side-wheelers were approaching. At the dock to the starboard of us the picture was duplicated. The giant liner Justicia (formerly the Staatendam of the Holland-America line, which was later sunk by a torpedo) seemed to tower above us, its camouflaged sides dotted with open portholes from which inquiring heads everywhere projected. From each rail undecipherable messages were being wigwagged, and loud calls for 'Jack' or 'Abe' were directed toward us. In the intervening water space were numerous coal barges, the contents of which were being fast transferred into the yawning hatches of the two vessels.

Just as the five o'clock rush of home-going civilians crowded the river ferries, the vessel was turned into the river. The lower decks were packed with troops, the upper now having been closed to them, and from the crush caused by this restriction of limits great cheers arose at the passing of each ferry or other passenger vessel. Secrecy had been the order of all pre-

vious proceedings, but now that we were actually off, the volleys of cheers and the whistle blasts and shouts which answered them acquainted thousands of people with the exact moment of our departure.

As we crept past Staten Island the sun was setting, and by the time we had reached the outer limits of the harbor the sky was fading from pink to gray. Straight and I stood at the port rail, facing the distant Long Island shore, and tried to read the messages which the winking blinker lights of a battleship near by were sending to our bridge. We failed, and failed again to read the flashes which sprang out from above us in reply, but soon gave up the task as the more important lights on the shore began to shrink and the approach of night became momentarily more noticeable. A thrill of awe passed down my spine, my scalp seemed to contract and turn cold, I stood silent, gazing across the water, occasionally glancing at my friend, who like myself and all the other occupants of the deck, seemed struck into silence.

I do not remember the exact train of my thoughts; I only know that I was held spellbound by the wonder of the fact that here I was, actually going to war, I who but a few years before had hardly turned aside a moment from the pleasures of my summer vacation to read in the papers of the beginning of a war in Europe. What was before me now? The long expanse of gray water, ever widening and blackening, symbolized the unknown future that stretched ahead.

The waves swept along the vessel's side with gurgling regularity; the black smoke slipped from the funnel's rim with a soft perpetual sigh, and swept into a curling unsubstantial link with all we were leaving behind. The sparsely occupied deck faded from sight;

the water passed from gray to black; the long undulations of light from the shore faded into points and disappeared.

The stars came out.

My friend and I looked at each other; said nothing; and went below.

CHAPTER II

MARMALADE AND RABBIT STEW

'WHY not start with the first squad,' I objected, 'if you have to start with our platoon at all?'

'They had K.P. the last day in Upton,' answered Hooper, the first sergeant. 'The mess steward — that squirrel with the trick nose — wants one squad with a non-com to serve all the food in your mess, so you're elected.'

Thus on Sunday morning the voyage was auspiciously begun; my squad was picked to dole out the food to over two hundred men from Companies 'A' and 'B.'

We began our 'tour of duty' at noon; reporting on 'M' deck, just above our quarters in the extreme stern of the ship and far below the lowest open deck. The floor of the main mess-hall was a canvas-covered hatch lid which formed one of a series extending through from the outer deck to the hold of the ship. On it long wooden tables, with attached parallel benches, were fastened. The clear space, about forty feet square, thus provided, was lighted by a few dim bulbs around the edges near the banging doors of the bunk-rooms that surrounded it. Forward of this, on either side, adjoined smaller rooms, each containing two long tables. Between these rooms ascended the two impossible flights of stairs, under which was hidden the caged-in, steaming hole that was used for a serving-room.

The crowd that had been waiting at the top of the stairs was precipitated headlong down them at the

sound of mess-call and a wild stampede for places followed. Extras were ejected by the corporal in charge, or seated on the benches, the proper capacity of which he was obliged to omit from his considerations; the waiters streamed out from the serving-cage with plates of the first course of the meal. Each man, objecting strenuously that he was being discriminated against, received a plate of the first course — say, soup. Howls for 'seconds' filled the air before the howlers had even finished their soup; 'seconds' were rushed out when all the 'firsts' were gone; the second course appeared and disappeared likewise with incredible speed. The coarse tablecloths at once became edible tapestries, the floor was a proof of the fact that food was abundant in 'the good old U.S.A.'; the waiters' nerves grew taut.

Pandemonium continued; cries that no bread had been served to certain tables caused it to be shown that the allotted loaves had been ineptly concealed in the laps of the most hoggish of the diners; demands for more rabbit stew, based on the ground that the first helping had consisted solely of skin and eyes, fell on unbelieving ears; shouts for more and yet more jam met with quick response, for the ship's larder flowed with jam and marmalade in true English army style. The third course — for we really ate well — was slammed upon the tables by the now nearly distraught waiters; buckets of water were placed at the ends of the benches; the mob rose, dragged its cutlery through the film of grease that covered the water, pushed it quickly over the general vicinity of a brownish, common towel, and clattered out while the waiters madly tore off the cloths, shook them, swept the tables with a dash of brooms, and prepared for the next inrush.

For a second half-hour another sitting held the stage; then it too went and the waiters sat down to calm their bedraggled tempers by the pleasures of eating. Upon finishing, they rose and cleaned out the room, washing tables, benches, and floors, and sweeping and tidying up generally, while the English boys in the kitchen continued their threefold more difficult and almost endless task, wiping the overworked dishes.

This strenuous job, amid a riot never suppressed by even the momentary appearance of an officer, was fortunately of but two days' duration. The squad was relieved at my insistence.

On Monday — the second day out from New York — we anchored inside the submarine net at Halifax and there the convoy assembled. Before the boats were all in their places on the davits after the second lifeboat drill on Tuesday, the anchor was weighed, and we were proceeding down the harbor past the point where the Belgian Relief Ship Imo, the cause of the Halifax disaster of the December before, was lying on her side under the snow-covered hills of the outer harbor shore. Before and behind us stretched a line of ships, all fringed with brown at every rail, and far ahead the basket masts of a warship tossed on the already roughening sea. Once more as the light faded out of the sky the land disappeared from our sight in the distance and darkness.

During the days that followed the life of the convoy went on calmly and regularly. The giant black shark's fin of the Justicia's camouflage shifted position on our starboard; the brown and blue apostrophes of our escorting converted cruiser wove in and out among the other vessels that shifted round or behind that heavily heaving flatiron, the warship St. Louis. Target prac-

tice was indulged in occasionally; from each of the ships puffs of yellow smoke would rise lazily, a succession of heavy thuds would sound, and columns of water would spring up in a group around some unoffending barrel far to the rear. The apathy of the idle men on deck was broken for an instant by a thrill and then the sunlit silence brooded on. At night one could see only the single pair of green and red lights carried by each of the vessels, and, after the first week, no lights at all, with the result that if the night was fair the black hulls of the neighboring ships slipped along invisible, except where they eclipsed the horizon stars, or, if cloudy, invisible, but felt, almost like the concealed watcher in a lonely room.

On board we arose at seven in the morning. Half an hour later we had mess. Twice daily at irregular intervals 'To Horse' was blown, summoning every man quickly to his boat position. Before nine we had folded back our mattresses and laid out our equipment upon them. From nine to eleven we were obliged to stay on deck in order that our quarters might be inspected and that we might be on hand for the boat drill. The deck was crowded with groups of men talking, smoking, or, if they had been fortunate enough to have brought reading matter, reading assiduously. Mess was again served at noon. The first few afternoons setting-up exercises were tried, but they were abandoned on account of the lack of space. The interdeck areas were occupied with a multitude of poker games; the decks were dotted with men trying, as in the morning, to avoid doing nothing.

About noon on the eleventh day out, after the St. Louis had left us, certain of the idle watchers noted far away on the horizon two little upright sticks that

seemed to be drawing near very swiftly. As these approached more appeared in other directions; a ring of mysterious objects was closing in on us. In about half an hour they resolved themselves into the masts of destroyers, and before long we were provided with a new form of amusement — watching the waves breaking over our submarine zone escorts. That evening all the occupants of the lower decks were required to find room on the open decks. Mattresses were scattered in every sheltered nook; the guards walked upon the faces of their cleverly hidden comrades, who, nevertheless, on account of the fine fresh air, enjoyed the soundest and most refreshing sleep of the voyage. By day the mattresses were restored to the bunks, but the decks were more crowded than usual, for the fear of being caught below decks by a torpedo explosion — the reason for the order for the new sleeping arrangements — kept even some of the card-players in the sunlight and consequently deprived them of their game.

On the morning of April 19th, we sighted a bald, mountainous island; a silent elation seemed to fill all the watching men, and as the ship moved on, they looked with breathless interest at the appearance of other peaks and the final emergence of a continuous shoreline.

All day we steamed by the tree-covered, apparently uninhabited, shore. My first sight of the Old World, of which I had dreamed from the time that I first began to read and which of late I had unavoidably pictured as touched in every part by the great conflict, was like the first glimpse of an undiscovered continent. Silence brooded everywhere; no human handiwork was seen; nature appeared to hold undisputed pacific sway; and a field for ardent exploration seemed to lie open before us.

Toward the late afternoon the destroyers left us and we saw, far away, a gray tower. We drew nearer; the chimneys of a city and then its general outlines evolved themselves out of the fog and smoke. Sandy shores succeeded the barren rocks; harbor shipping crowded about us. We entered the river Mersey and progressed toward the Liverpool docks. Crowded ferries dashed by and we cheered them just as we had cheered the New York ferries two weeks before; we cheered the other ships of our convoy as we passed them; the band played furiously; we cheered every tug and row boat, every floating log or orange peel. We sang 'Over There,' which we were not yet 'fed up' with. We made the water-front echo for an hour. Then, since we were not to land that night, we subsided and began to look round at the crowded shipping, the docks, the buildings on shore, the two-storied electric tramcars, and all the sights of interest. Dominating our vision, commanding the water-front from the center of a park, was a thing which of all others we saw and remembered: a sign; black, twenty-foot letters on a white ground, reading, not 'Welcome,' not even 'Cable crossing, do not anchor here,' but — who would have guessed it — 'SPRATT'S DOG BISCUIT.'

Liverpool was well used to seeing troops pass. Only a small crowd turned out to watch our progress through the streets on the morning of April 20th. We marched at ease, every man turning his head continually to take in the sights and to see how many American flags there were among the weather-stained Union Jacks which hung faithfully from every building. Our conceit did not suffer here, as it did when we looked at the single row of spectators, for the Stars and Stripes was liber-

ally displayed. It astonished me to see the glow of delight that came into the eyes of many of my comrades when they saw the thirteen stripes, since so many of them spoke with difficulty the language of the country for which they stood, and seemed to be Americans only in name. Any one who thinks that foreign-born citizens, as a class, are detrimental to our national life should have seen that look, and, in the days that followed, have heard an American of Italian or Polish birth telling a Frenchman or Tommy how far his country, 'the good old U.S.A.,' exceeded any European state.

On we went. At one corner a woman in deep black, who was crying visibly at the sight of the hurrying column, turned the attention of the ranks from the flag-spotting pursuit or the business of waving to the stenographers and shopgirls in the second-story windows, and brought momentary silence. At another corner a girl who was giving out jonquils, as long as they lasted, to each man who passed, deflected the ranks to the distraction of the non-coms, who, as I know, were struggling to preserve order and alignment and make our first foreign appearance duly dignified.

Finally we reached the terminal of the London and Northwestern Railway.

Elaborate directions had been given us as to how we should entrain, but our officers apparently did not have command, as they had expected, and the Englishmen had no time to waste in any elaboration. As we entered the station, the first mistake, from the corporal's point of view, was made. The command 'right by twos' was given. It placed each corporal behind instead of ahead of his squad, as the correct command 'left by twos' would have done. We crowded along-

side of the train. A 'leftenant' ran along the column, 'Eight! There you are, men. Hop in there!' Somehow he had not started even. All but one of my squad got in the compartment ahead, and I was thrust into the next compartment with only one of my very own crowd and six of some one else's squad.

While we sat in the train a column of Australian troops who had come over in the same convoy with us marched into the station. As they stood waiting to enter their cars, we talked with them and listened eagerly to the multitude of conjectures which they offered as to where we might be going. Whenever an Australian let fall the name of some English town, some American grabbed it up, and later in the day brought forth, with all the wisdom of a trained rumormonger, the unqualified statement that that was the place we were bound for.

We liked the Australians at once — though they looked on our cosmopolitan crowd as very much of a curiosity — and we continued to like Australians whenever me met them. We got along better with them than with any other foreign troops.

Finally the train drew out through the usual mangy suburbs of a city, and Liverpool was behind us. When we had quitted Camp Upton, winter was still the ruling season; the camp had been a lake of brown mud surrounded by a burned area of charred stumps and rotting leaves. The only living vegetation visible had been the tiny pine trees by the barracks steps and the carefully preserved trees on Headquarters Hill. But here we were in the center of what seemed miraculously luxuriant evidences of spring. There had been no gradual transition for us. One week it was winter, two weeks later it was full-blooming spring. The damp,

neat little handmade landscape was resplendent; quince bushes, apple, cherry, and pear trees were everywhere in bloom; fields were shining in intense velvety richness; hedges seemed to be swelling visibly; thatched roofs too were sending up shoots of grass; new life was everywhere.

At about five o'clock we halted in the outskirts of London opposite a cheaply imposing amusement palace, the Olympia Theater. London, as represented by the back of the Olympia Theater, was not imposing. We were glad to move on. Just as dusk fell we came to Tunbridge Junction and were allowed to leave the train to stretch our legs upon the station platform.

There a large enameled sign attracted our attention and set going a hullabaloo of guesses about our destination. Hadn't the Australians, who knew everything, of course, said we were going to Winchester to train? Somebody must have given them the wrong dope, for there was the sign, 'London 30 miles, Folkestone 45 miles, Dover 50 miles.' The dullest geographer in the crowd did not have to be told that the latter points were just about as close to France as any points in England. Some of the levity that had pervaded the train was dropped, for were we not getting nearer the war than we had thought?

As we marched out of the Dover station at nine o'clock, silence was ordered in the ranks. Silence was for once maintained, for we were either too busy with our thoughts or too tired to want to talk. We slodged along through the quiet streets and up the curving road which led to a cold fortress barracks, high on the side of the great cliff above the town. As we filed up the narrow steps and across the drawbridge, I glanced

back over the still, moonlit harbor. A great number of small war vessels lay there quiet. Far out in the wake of the moon were the turrets of a warship. Beyond, in the darkness, a signal lamp winked. In the utmost distance the clouds were rosy with the glow of the flashes of inaudible guns.

Metallic-voiced sergeants harried the single column on the stairs, and parted it at every landing, sending just the right number of men into the rooms on each floor. Others went into the rooms with us, showed us the rolls of blankets by the door, and directed us to lie down upon the floor and get all the sleep we could before the Boche airmen should begin to take advantage of the excellent moonlight. 'The raids don't usually start till one o'clock, so you 'ave two hours to sleep. Use 'em!' advised one three-striper, as our men, who had been used to cots, began to murmur about the crime of making them sleep on the floor, three to a pair of blankets.

The Boches left us in peace. Though the floors of Rest Camp Number 2 were made of stone, our first day in England was followed by a night of unbroken sleep.

At the sounding of mess-call next morning, each platoon was formed and conducted to the ground floor mess-halls. Several sittings were required, for the space was small, but finally Company 'B's' turn came and we took our places before the slices of bread and bacon on the long tables. A little marmalade and some oatmeal were added to our fare, but the meal was small compared with those to which we had been accustomed. Small, but really adequate, and as large as I had expected it would be after reading about the very strin-

gent food regulations to which England had been forced to submit. It was perfectly in keeping with the privations which I had expected a really war-ridden country would have to undergo, and I felt no grievance at the diminished quantity. A surprise was in store for me; a surprise that made me realize that some of our men still failed to understand that there was a war on, and that a war might be expected to jolt their complacency occasionally.

The commandant of the barracks, or Rest Camp, as the place was called, came in accompanied by one of our officers. The two circulated about the room, and finally, just as they were about to leave, the Englishman asked, 'Are there any complaints?' It was a stock phrase to which no answer was expected.

'Yes, sir!' growled a swarthy adopted American.

The British officer appeared overcome with astonishment. His American companion blushed and sputtered. Both rallied.

'What is it?'

'Look at this bacon. Only one slice. — One slice bread. Oatmeal. — Tea. — Not enough — at all. No marmalade for me — sir!'

'Bring in some more marmalade,' growled the officer and went out.

The place buzzed with arguments about whether the man was right or wrong in complaining. More marmalade appeared — a one-pint jar to each table of thirty men — and that was all!

We washed our knives and forks in the little stream that dribbled from a faucet in the yard and then drifted upstairs to explore the building.

Word soon came that we might have the Sunday free to look around Dover as we wished. Straight ar-

gued that the platoon sergeant ought to stay near his job, so I had to go alone.

That Sunday afternoon the Dover Esplanade afforded a truly remarkable sight, crowded, as it was, with innumerable baby carriages, neatly dressed children, civilians of every class, and soldiers and sailors of every Allied country and service.

At the far end of the Esplanade I was attracted by the loud slatting noise of the motors of the small airplanes that I had heard all day, and soon I was surprised to see the planes comparatively close by, rushing over the edge of the cliff at frequent intervals and swooping off. Determined to find where the stream of planes was coming from, I set out to ascend the East Cliff road, under the noses of the guns that peered from the rock-hewn galleries of Dover Castle.

After I had walked about a mile on the close-cropped grass near the edge of the cliff, I came to the cluster of buildings at the airdrome. I was not yet used to seeing airplanes as commonly as automobiles, and the number which I now beheld dashing about everywhere gave me a strange thrill. Hardly a minute passed that a plane did not leave or arrive on the field. The mechanics would trundle a tiny little gray biplane out to the starting-line before the hangars. The pilot would soon saunter up and climb in unconcernedly. The mechanics would start the motor, and, pulling the blocks out from under the wheels, dart to one side. As the machine wabbled across the uneven turf gathering velocity with the increase of the tremendous withering swirl of wind from the propeller, other mechanics ran along guiding the tail until sufficient speed was attained to give it stability. The next instant the wheels began to ride lightly through the grass; the next, all

wabbling ceased; and then, as the mechanics dropped back, the plane slanted gracefully, imperceptibly, into the air, swooped to the left, and, turning, thundered overhead and passed over the cliff edge with the wind. Twenty-five or more machines gyrated in the air, repeating stunt upon stunt in bewildering profusion, for the pilots were learning, or practicing all they knew.

The most engrossing sight tires at last. I retreated to the rear of the buildings and started to talk with some of the American mechanics who were on duty there. After answering all my questions about the place, they did not neglect the golden opportunity which my presence offered.

'Have you had your money changed yet?' one asked.

'No; I can't find any place to get it changed, and it's no good anywhere except at the canteen! Where do you go to get it changed?' was the reply he wanted.

'I'll change it for you.'

'That's great. I'll remember you in my will. Is five too much?'

Five wasn't. He gave me a pound note and made a fair profit which I did not protest, for it was worth the difference to have some money with which I could buy supper in town.

That evening, as I was climbing the North Military Road not far from the entrance to the Citadel, a couple of civilians sauntered up to me.

''I, corporal! Some 'ill, hain't it!' one began. I assented, and, smelling the powerfully alcoholic breath of the pair, anticipated an illuminating conversation. Their description of the latest air raids was as vivid as their knowledge of my ignorance about the scenes of war allowed them to make it, and they pointed out some of the houses which had been destroyed recently.

'Oh, 'ere's a question I just been dyin' to ask,' the largest of the two burbled as a group of Americans passed. 'What mikes your fellows so dark complectioned. Seems as like they're Indians. But they haren't all that wye. You, f'r instance.'

They were much interested to learn that a large part of the 77th Division men were of foreign birth. Apparently it had never occurred to them that there could be an Italian in the American army.

Finally neither party could think of anything more to say and I hustled into barracks just about a half an hour after sunset, or about nine o'clock, the very hour set for our return.

The stone floor was a little softer that night, for I was tired.

CHAPTER III

INTO ZUTKERQUE AND OUT AGAIN

ONE of the immortal Bairnsfather cartoons shows Bill and Bert buttoned up to their ears in their greatcoats, encased in life-belts, and standing in blank-faced misery at the rail of a wildly slanting Channel steamer, while the driving rain slats past them unheeded.

'I say, Bill,' Bert is groaning, just as the ship apparently reaches the lowest point of a sickening swoop, 'I wish they'd fight this bloody war in England.'

I expected to find the Channel lots worse than the Atlantic.

Eight o'clock on Monday morning found us clattering down the road to the shore, hurried along by the weight of our packs. Two hours later our small excursion steamer eased slowly through the submarine net at the harbor mouth and then darted off with a burst of speed just as a cat might sneak out of an alley mouth and rush for cover across the open street. Ahead rode a string of similar vessels, at intervals of about half a mile, and behind came others similarly spaced. We passed along what seemed to be almost a protected lane. Great numbers of war vessels of various classes were stationed at apparently fixed positions across the Channel. Large seaplanes hovered about ponderously, and high above, silver-gray airships floated lazily, watching for the stealing blue shadow in the sunlit water which would mark the passage of an enemy submarine. It was a perfect day, for the air was clear and undisturbed, and the brilliantly blue sea was tossing regularly and gently. No one felt the least discomfort

from the slight motion, nor experienced the least fear of hostile menace. Everything seemed to favor our crossing to France; the machinery of the transport service was well oiled and working smoothly. By noon we had come near to the low French coast that stretched away to the west, a succession of soft green fields rising gradually inland and dotted here and there with the slow-turning, brown sails of the pepper-pot windmills; and to the east, a series of grass-flecked sand-dunes.

By twelve-thirty we had drawn in between the outlying sandbar and the dunes on the shore, and come to rest at the stone quay at Calais. The voyage was safely over and we hurried below to throw off our life-belts and find our packs.

We hustled onto the dock every one moving with alacrity in hope that the quicker he acted the sooner he would get lunch. Baggage details were called for, and the unfortunates who were picked were not seen again in their companies for two days, during which time they pitched endless quantities of blue barracks bags from boat to dock, from dock to truck, and from truck to train.

The German air-raiders had dropped many bombs near the dock, with the result that every window in the empty hotels and stores that backed it was broken, and stared blackly out upon the scene.

After but a short wait we marched off to another 'rest camp,' following along a sandy road at the foot of the high sea wall, or dike, which keeps the water of the Channel from overflowing the whole lower section of the city. A group of German prisoners — the first Boches whom we had seen — smiled contentedly upon us as we passed, in such a self-satisfied man-

ner as to create the most intense indignation in our ranks.

'They're the happiest-looking guys I've seen since I left New York,' growled Chavelle. 'Never saw a better-fed looking bunch of fellows before. Nothing for them to worry about.'

After passing hundreds upon hundreds of long wooden barracks we came at last to our section of the camp — a large tented area. The tents were white canvas, conical in shape, walled up with sandbags about three feet above the wooden floors. The whole area was of white soft beach sand which, tracked into the tents, worked into every article of clothing, the mechanism of every rifle, and every possible cranny that it could find. Wash-houses, where running water was to be had, were fortunately handy, and the mess shack was not far away. At the end of the side street on which our area was located was a British canteen, and opposite it a Y.M.C.A. building that offered frequent shows.

Late in the afternoon I sauntered into the crowded canteen to see what might be the chances of buying some chocolate, and while I waited on the outside of the crowd that struggled to reach the counter I learned one of the reasons why the men got 'broke' so quickly.

'Any chocolate, Jack?' asked Morris Saul.

'Yep, Bill. One and sixpence per. What kind o' money 'ave you? Oh, francs! Well. Two of 'em,' replied the clerk.

'How many cakes for this?' said Saul, dragging out a ten-franc note.

'Five, but you can only 'ave three. What else hits ye? Fine sardines!'

'Well, all right. Give me the balance in sardines.'

'Three cans comes to eleven francs, fivepence.'

'All right, pick it out of this,' producing a handful of assorted French, American, and English coins.

'You hain't got it. Tike two cans o' peaches and even it up to fifteen francs. Yep. That dollar 'ill do for five francs. Good, fifteen, but that brand o' peaches costs ten centimes a can more. The other kind's out. Yep. That dime's worth fifty centimes, you get thrippence back.'

Morris finally escaped on an accidental evening-up of the amount, and the clerk continued to sell whatever he wanted to get rid of by manipulating the prices through the coinage of three different nations.

From there I ventured out upon the main camp road and climbed up on the dike, from which I could see the whole military settlement as it stretched its concourse of tents and buildings along the shore for a half-mile in either direction. The road was packed with a crowd of Americans and Britishers, in which here and there were sprinkled the variegated costumes of Colonials. Egyptian soldiers in gay, loose-ended turbans and skirts passed by on horseback; Indians in brown turbans padded along quietly; night-faced Africans mingled with the rest. Gangs of green-coated Germans plodded along under guard, returning to their quarters at the far end of camp. The Chinese coolies sat penned up in their wire enclosure, singing weird shrill songs to the accompaniment of a monotonous beating upon an empty petrol can, or bartered through the wires with the amusement-seeking crowd.

The next morning the companies were marched to a warehouse in the city, and, filing in, deposited their almost new, American model, Enfield rifles in piles

upon the floor. The men on duty there were hard at work greasing the rifles and packing them away. As we passed out, British rifles were handed us, and we were obliged to juggle them at arm's length to keep from ruining our uniforms with the cosmoline with which they were covered. In the street outside, small boys were making fortunes selling old rags with which we could clean our new acquisitions sufficiently to permit us to carry them back to camp. The whole of the remainder of the day was devoted to getting those rifles into condition for inspection and free enough of oil so that every breath of wind would not convert them into sand images.

The second morning we marched in the rain to a camp about six miles from the city, where gas masks were issued to us. The men formed in a single column leading into the storehouse. Three British soldiers stood outside, and spoke to each man as he passed.

Said the first, 'You are now to draw gas masks. Pay strict attention to what the next man says.'

Said the second, 'The next man will tell you a number which is the size of the mask you will need. Remember it, and when you get inside shout it out smartly to the man giving out the masks.'

Said the third, 'One,' or 'Three,' or 'Two,' or 'Four,' according to the size of the face of the man he was addressing. He gauged the size instantly by eye.

Inside the building, the masks, in their square brown satchels, were dealt out quickly. As soon as a group of twenty or thirty men emerged from the building, they were assembled in a ring about a loud-voiced sergeant and given instructions as to how to put on the masks. Many were the smothering gurgles which came from the befuddled, struggling fellows upon their first im-

mersion in the masks. The sergeant in charge of the group in which I took my lesson left a parting word of cheer with us.

'These are all good masks. Every one of 'em's seen service. The fellows who 'ad 'em all went west some wye or t'other, and now they've been fixed up for you uns.'

From there we marched to another camp where we received steel shrapnel helmets.

The steel helmet is an interesting affair, the external appearance of which is familiar to every one, but the inside of which is popularly shrouded in mystery. The mystery is easily dispelled.

A felt pad is held into the crown by a copper rivet. The leather chin-strap, held by the same rivet, passes down the side through flat steel loops, and fastens in a sliding, adjustable loop below. At the steel loops is secured a leather sweat band, heavily padded and inlaid with short lengths of rubber pipe. This is connected all around with a white whipcord net that converges on a drawstring in the crown of the helmet. To adjust the helmet to any sized head you have only to tie the drawstring until the net fits the head comfortably. The net holds the helmet itself away from contact with the head, and the rubber pipe in the band takes up a large part of the jar of any heavy blow on the exterior. Many a time I have cracked my helmet against the top of a dugout door and felt hardly any of the jar. The whole contrivance weighs thirty-five ounces, and can stop a steel-jacketed bullet traveling at six hundred feet per second, but since you have to be over two and a half miles away from where the bullet is fired before it begins to slow down to anything like that speed, its chief value is against the

glancing blows of shell fragments. Sawdust mixed with the paint to prevent the helmet acquiring a revealing gloss is the last protective measure embodied in it.

We returned to camp and devoted one more day to cleaning our new rifles and drilling with our gas masks. On Friday morning we made our packs, brushed the sand out of our hair for the last time, and marched out of Calais.

A train of 'side-door Pullmans,' bearing the oft-quoted legend 'Hommes 40, Chevaux 8,' found on all French freight cars, drew up at the railway platform as we arrived. We all clambered in, only thirty to a car in spite of the advertised capacity, and deposited our packs under the benches along each side, or hung them from the shutter bars. By the time the packs were all arranged and every man had found a seat on bench or floor, the impulse of the starting engine was heard clattering through the train as each coupling tightened, and in another moment away we went, leaving the freight yards of Calais behind us enveloped in a heavy shower of soaking gray rain.

If it were not for the long hours of rain — now pouring in sudden torrents, now feathering down with quiet inattention — France could never be so fair when the sun shines. There is the contrast. There is the green that comes from the rain.

I first saw our first billet just after a shower. The rich green hedges twinkled with water jewels as the birds hopped about in them, shaking the stems; little streams tore across the courtyard into the pool in the center where the ducks splattered awkwardly at the water bugs; all the buildings shone as if newly painted;

and the thatched roofs, where an occasional cricket chirruped, appeared resplendently green while the moss which covered them still drank up the water that had fallen. The billet was indeed as picturesque an Old-World farm as one could hope to see.

We entered through a large, wrought-iron gate into a courtyard which had once been cobblestoned, but now bulged irregularly, and which was occupied by great numbers of scampering chickens, unwieldy ducks, eccentric leaping rabbits, and by a few heavy farm wagons, sleds, stone-boats, and gardening-tools. Opposite us the white-stucco house, the red roof of which shadowed the ground-floor windows, occupied one side of the courtyard; on the left the thatched stable for the horses and cows adjoined the house, and near the gate merged into a creamery and then into a rabbit hutch surmounted by a round-towered pigeon-house; to the right a long woodshed shut off the orchard which could just be seen through another gate. Age and irregularity tinged the whole and merged the miscellaneous sections together gracefully, just as they also softened the gnarled details of the old country into one harmonious whole that seemed to have grown naturally; never to have been made by hands.

Behind us, closing in the court, was the hay-barn in which the platoon slept. The low floor, where the wain would stand, was left free as a lounging-space. Beyond the guard rail on one side, the packed earthen floor, softened by a thick layer of hay, provided sleeping-space for forty-five of the platoon, and on the other side, cots, of canvas nailed to board frames and equipped with hay-filled bed-sacks, accommodated the non-coms elegantly. The big doors stood open all day and on pleasant nights, admitting the fresh air,

and the swallows, which sometimes fluttered about at night rustling their wings mysteriously in competition with the stealthy scrabblings of the inoffensive mice. When our barracks bags reached us each man unloaded his and dried out the contents, and then, producing all the odds and ends which he had brought, fitted up his little floor space according to his taste and means, piling his books, or cards, or extra shoes upon the beams above his head. At night, when the precious *bougies*, or candles, flaunted long shadows across the wall from the groups gathered in the shelter to play cards, talk, or write letters, and the strange sounds of the night animals alternated in the darkness, the scene was one of curious interest.

We arose at five every week day and marched to our company kitchen in town, a half-mile away, and breakfasted, sitting on the turf in another orchard. Then we clanked back to deposit our mess-kits in our quarters and to roll our packs for drill. After that we marched to town again, past the little *estaminet* at the road fork, the heavy-shuttered residences of the town, the almost empty *épicerie*, the church, the army water carts, more residences, and out again through the fields to the walled-in pasture of the five-centuries-old *grande maison*. Various kinds of drill occupied us until noon. We marched back for lunch, and back once more for drill. At six o'clock in the evening we filed through the stable yard where our kitchen stood and carried our mess-kits, dripping stew and marmalade, into the orchard. At times it seemed as if our whole life was spent clattering back and forth to our outlying billet to get our mess-kits. But the long evenings came at last.

Zutkerque was about sixty kilometers from Ypres,

U.S. Official Drawing

A COMPANY KITCHEN

The rolling kitchen has been wheeled into the archway of a courtyard. The cook wears an overseas cap of French cut. The American caps did not have the high peaks fore and aft, and many Americans bought French caps because they thought them more sporting than their own

which was about the nearest point to us on 'the line,' or, as one would have said if he had dared to appear simple enough to speak in more familiar units, about thirty-seven miles. It was not only moderately close to the line, but on a direct route from the large German aviation centers to Calais, and in close proximity to Audruicq, where Jerry, as the English called our enemy, well knew that there were huge supplies of valuable stores. The result was that the airplane traffic over our heads was very abundant at certain times of day. Every clear morning, while we breakfasted, we saw English planes, a mile or more up, winging along in formation, with the sun glistening on their wings that flashed against the background of rich blue, and sending down the rhythmic pervading buzz of motors, returning from their night raids or early-morning bombing tours. They seemed to be moving slowly, but one group would pass from horizon to horizon in only a few minutes, and before their sound had ceased another would creep into sight. Often single planes swept by at low altitudes going to the front, but all, whether single or in groups, that appeared within our circle of sky, seemed to pass directly over our village as if they sought the church steeple as a marker on their route to Calais. That was what the popular notion claimed, though it is more likely that the city close by was the mark for which they steered.

One morning, before any light had appeared in the sky, the barn full of sleepers was awakened by a terrific uproar such as none of us had heard before. Evidently some Jerries were in the air over our heads, for above the whistle and howl and crash of the Archies (anti-aircraft shells) going up from hidden emplace-

ments all about Audruicq pulsated the roar of powerful motors of contending tones. Now and then the steady chorus was drowned out by the still more earth-shattering crash as a bomb fell a mile or more away from us. Jerry left several débris-filled craters in the Engineers' dump that night. When every one was awake enough to be aware of what was going on, various were the attitudes assumed. Some of the men rushed to the doorway to look out, but were restrained from leaving the shelter of the roof by the occasional swish of shrapnel fragments ploughing through the trees in the orchard. Others burrowed under the blankets as children do during a thunderstorm, or sought to barricade themselves with bags. Still others, myself included, were too drowsy to do other than merely roll over and seek to go to sleep again, with the wish that the racket would soon be over. Perhaps the incident would have been the greatest thrill the town could have afforded, but, as it was, I was too sleepy to get more than the most elementary irritation from it.

If you have been accustomed to writing only your own letters and letting other people write theirs, it is quite a novel experience to act as the composing scribe. The requirement of the censor that all letters in language unfamiliar to the company officers, who usually did the censoring, should be forwarded to the central office and consequently delayed, led to my having the opportunity to enjoy the experience.

One evening, while I was sitting on the side of the woodpile farthest away from the ball game, I was interrupted by the timid approach of little Lipschitz, one of the foreign-born members of the platoon.

'Read this letter, will you, corporal?'

'Sure! If I can.'

'Oh! You can. It's in English.'

'It's from Aurelia,' I said, glancing at the ruled paper.

'My sister. She forgets that I don't have learned English.'

Well, I read the letter. Aurelia wrote chiefly about her husband and her children, and inquired for her brother, who listened delighted, for it was his first overseas letter.

'Will you make an answer?'

'Yes. How shall I begin?'

'Oh! How do you begin? I do not know. — Um! — Ah! — Make the whole letter like hers. Just change the words you have to.'

It was a brilliant idea, but it would not have told Aurelia much. I took the liberty of throwing in a brief outline of our adventures, and then wormed the answers to her questions out of 'brother.'

We had landed in England on April 20th; spent Sunday, the 21st, at Dover; crossed to France on Monday; and spent the two following days at Calais. On Wednesday, the 24th, we arrived at Zutkerque, and by the following Sunday we were all familiar with the town. At about ten minutes past twelve on Sunday morning I was returning from church to the billet when one of the C.O.'s (commanding officer's) orderlies met me.

'Corporal Ranlett! — Hi! — You must report to the orderly-room at twelve-thirty with your pack and barracks bag.'

'What?' said I incredulously, thinking that he must be trying to play a trick on me, for that meant

that I had but twenty minutes to do what would take me fully an hour. I had not yet become used to making my pack in three minutes. However, he convinced me that he was telling the truth.

In the billet I found Straight hurriedly packing my bag, and I saw my pack all rolled and waiting. He was going as well, but, like me, and the two other non-coms, had no idea what our destination was to be.

'We probably won't see you here again,' he said, thinking that the commissions might have come through. I did not know, but to be safe said 'good-bye' all around.

At the orderly-room we could learn nothing definite. 'All of you are ordered to various schools. Limbers will get here for you after a while,' said the first sergeant.

It was most fortunate that we had hurried. It gave us more time to rest than we should have had if we had been late. My limber arrived at three o'clock, only two hours and a half late, and away I rolled in the rearmost of the two little springless wagons.

'Wye darn't ye work, 'stead o' turning me hout? I thort to find three o' youn, teny how,' began the driver as soon as he had got out of hearing of the officers in the square.

'Well, if you had told me where to go I'd have got there two hours ago walking,' I answered. 'Speed's your middle name, isn't it?'

No! It wasn't. But the conversation was more pleasant after that.

CHAPTER IV

A LONG WAY IN THE DARK

THE limber joggled me over nine miles of muddy road, past innumerable windmills, until it came eventually to the headquarters of the Seventy-Seventh Division at Éperlecques, a little town near Saint-Omer.

'Ye report to Sergeant Robinson, fellah!' grunted the driver. 'In yon room at the head o' the steps. 'N one t'other thing. Doan pull me out of a Sunday when they sen' ye back!'

Sergeant Robinson, who took command of the group of about thirty non-coms and privates that had been assembled from the whole division, could not forego the pleasure of 'springing' the joke that was always used about intelligence personnel.

'This is called the Intelligence School,' he began, announcing to us for the first time the cause of our visit, 'because they've picked a bunch that needs some intelligence pumped into them! Stuff aside, though. We've an English lieutenant coming to put us through a two weeks' course covering everything necessary to make us useful observers at the front. When it's over, the non-coms will go back to their companies to take charge of the observation posts and all the work of securing information about the enemy in their sectors. The regimental H.Q. men will go back to help their intelligence officers, and the privates will stay here for further training to prepare them to work in the divisional observation posts.'

The division headquarters occupied a large and formerly very handsome estate of about fifty acres. Close

to the house, but hidden by the trees, were the large stables, ranged around three sides of a brick court.

The student body of the School, which was to share these beautiful grounds with the personnel of division headquarters, was, like the whole division, a cross-section of all the types of men to be found in New York. In selecting men for it some of the company officers throughout the division followed the well-worn custom of sending away the least desirable men in their commands, while others had sent those who could profit most by the training. The man whom I was most delighted to see was James Russell Parsons, Harvard '19, whom I had known at college and in the Second Company at the Camp Upton O.T.S., and whom I had seen often on the Lapland during our voyage from New York to Liverpool. We were constant companions during the following weeks and our acquaintance became closer.

But there were other men who stood out in the group. A member of a large New York advertising firm regaled us often in our leisure moments with accounts of his conquests in making the 'Sweetheart of the corn' and 'Ask Dad, he knows!' famous watchwords. The sergeant in charge recounted his experiences as an assistant editor of a large daily paper in the big city. A school teacher in our midst kept his knowledge to himself until the inevitable ready talkers who knew very little on most subjects, but never hesitated to discuss every phase of anything loudly and at length, had worn out their voices at last, and then put the discussion on its feet in a moment by the aid of a few real facts. A Western telegraph lineman entertained with tales of hold-ups and rescues of the motion-picture variety. Several Princeton men discussed former Har-

vard-Princeton races and games whenever there was the least suggestion that they might be listened to. And finally there was diminutive, self-important Max Schneiderman, whose captain must certainly have hoped to get rid of him, who brayed about how delighted he was with the fact that he would be assigned to the division observation post whenever we should be in the lines, because he 'knew' that the post would be out of range of enemy bombardment — and because he was one of the keenest observers ever born. He was never able to read a map or compass or to understand why they put a mill-scale in the issue binoculars, but he realized — he said it himself — that such things were mere unimportant technicalities.

After the sergeant had exercised us for three days, showing us everything he knew about map sketching and reading, and the vertical and horizontal clock methods of target designation, and had put us through many hours of gas-mask drill, the English officer arrived. Lieutenant Dearborn, of the King's Royal Rifles, was an unassuming, quiet man who had seen and done much along the front during the whole war, and he at once set about shattering Max's dream that intelligence work was a soft snap. He lectured several hours a day upon the reading of French, German, and English maps, methods of sketching, German insignia and uniforms, airplane photography, the art of camouflage, sharpshooting, intelligence reports, building observation posts, signaling, telegraphy, and the dangers of the profession. He marched us to the target range and got us accustomed to the English rifle; he sent us broadcast over the countryside, following map courses; he showed us how to find just how many men a village would accommodate, and how to report our findings.

He had us dig imitation shell holes which were realistic even to the foot of water in their bottoms, and construct observation posts, which in his parlance of abbreviations were 'O. Pips,' that could not be seen in airplane photos or even by an observer close by.

One day he took us to the field where we had dug our shell holes and built our O. Pips, and, throwing himself down on the ground, gave a long demonstration of the proper method of crawling in No-Man's-Land and the correct way of getting through the enemy wire. When he was through he called to Max, who had been disregarding the demonstration with his usual confidence, to try to see what he could do.

'What, sir?' answered the fellow, sitting still where he was.

'Stand up! Go over to the edge of the woods with your rifle and crawl up through the grass to the shell hole without being seen.'

Max ran to the spot and began to crawl.

'It's a trifle swampy there,' said the annoyed officer to the rest of the class. 'I hope he finds it soft and easy.'

Max couldn't be seen, but one would not have had much difficulty in knowing where to shoot to hit him, his squirming was so audible. About fifteen seconds was sufficient to tire him and he stood up, a dreary pillar of brown mud.

'Sir!' he yelled. 'I'm to be a division observer. I shan't need to know how to do this.'

'Division observers have to serve at the front first! Do it!'

'My rifle's clean.'

'Your problem is to keep it clean so you can use it when you get in touch with Jerry. Keep on going!'

The fellow flopped again and worked his way along on his back this time. After about thirty seconds he rose again.

'Both sides the same color now,' remarked the officer to the delighted audience; and to him he said, 'You're well camouflaged now. Keep coming.'

'It's too wet,' groaned Max. 'I'll write my Congressman that division observers don't have to crawl.'

'Come on,' ordered Dearborn, and saw Max through to the bitter end in the puddle at the bottom of the shell hole.

But the next day when the 'division observer' had got his clothes clean once more, he resumed his patronizing manner and looked with disdain upon us 'unfortunate' non-coms who might have to go to the front some time.

But that was not the only jolt that Max experienced. The ex-school teacher did something which he could never understand. Seven of us were sent to a point two thousand paces seventy-five degrees east of north of the shrine outside the west gate of the grounds. We went across country to the point, which proved to be a British canteen where we could all buy fancy biscuits, and we filled our pockets well before returning by road. Allston, the teacher, ate but one of his and then set out with the rest untouched. Soon he gathered in a French boy from a house by the road and gained his companionship by the assistance of a few cookies. Talking with the boy he fell behind the party, while Max, 'borrowing' a cigarette from the man next to him, remarked, 'Some people are more wasteful than nothing, giving away stuff to children like that.'

Allston increased his retinue to seven in no time. When he reached the crossroad which the rest of us had

just passed, he was seen to stop, look up the road a moment, and then, with a '*Restez-là*' to the children, to run quickly out of sight. Soon he appeared on the road again, carrying a huge bundle of withes cut from one of the roadside hedgerows, which he was carrying for the little bent old woman beside him, with whom he was conversing as pleasantly as his knowledge of the language would permit. He went out of his way to carry that bundle to her home, while Max, accompanying the rest of us who felt disgraced that one of the party had done the honors for us all, remarked, 'I always thought he was a little off. A man who reads a book evenings when he doesn't have to, and who totes a big load for an old wreck like her can't wear more than a number three hat.'

The School ended at noon on Saturday, the 12th of May, and the men who were to be assigned to division headquarters went off by truck to the Australian Corps School for further work. Parsons left in this crowd. Max, speechless with grief, was returned to his company. All the non-coms were to go back to their companies and those whose outfits were near by hiked off at once. With a few other men from Zutkerque, I waited for the limber which was to call for us. By four o'clock it had not come, and by telephoning to the limber station we learned that the order for one had never been received, and that we could not have one until Sunday morning.

A new man had moved into the sleeping-quarters which I had vacated. I was obliged to look elsewhere for a dry place to sleep. Across the end of the stable courtyard was a row of large brick dog-kennels built into the foundation of the pigeon-house. These were regularly used by the British staff chauffeurs for sleep-

ing-rooms, but one was vacant, so that night I moved myself and my pack into the four-by-four-by-four-foot box and pulled down the double burlap screen over the door to keep the light of the candle from shining out of the only private room that I had occupied for more than two months, and revealing my whereabouts to Jerry aviators. I had to arrange myself diagonally across the floor space in order to be able to lie down at all, but finally I got myself fitted in and rolled up in my blanket. Then I put my candle on the shelf over my head, took the 'Old Curiosity Shop' which I was reading out of my mess tin, propped my head up with my little air pillow on my pack, and spent a pleasant hour with Dickens before I felt ready to blow out the light and turn over for the night. You don't fully appreciate a private room until you have been without one for a long time, and then you certainly can revel in the luxury of the spaciousness of even a dog kennel.

I reported at our orderly-room in Zutkerque at about noon on Sunday. The company had gone to a rifle range some distance off.

Late in the afternoon the company returned. It marched into the square, stacked arms, and came to 'Rest.' Every man eased himself to the cobblestone pavement, and sprawled out into whatever position he fancied would be the most comfortable. A Babel of deeply sincere remarks filled the air: 'If they ever move me again it will be on a hearse! — My feet is worn clean offen my legs. — Of all the terrible hikes! — Gosh! We're back! But a live man at the range is better than a dead one here, seems to me! — A year from now you'll be three hundred and sixty-four days dead, boy! — They say the first hundred years are the

hardest, but I guess they never walked on these roads. — Oh, my feet! —— that pack. My shoulders are numb from it!'

But if the men grumbled then, what did they do that evening when Captain Breckenridge announced that we should at once turn in everything but our field equipment? We lugged our barracks bags into town and filed into the orderly-room building, where we unloaded into piles the extra breeches, gloves, underclothes, barracks shoes, and other issue articles which we did not carry. Our private treasures, too numerous and bulky for our packs, we left in our bags, which were 'stored' in the house — and have never been seen since. It was eleven o'clock at night before the task was over.

At five o'clock on the morning of Monday, May 13th, we turned out to roll our packs preparatory to a move. It is no wonder that we were laden down when they were finished, for with two suits of underclothes, two blankets, overcoats, raincoats, and all the other articles of equipment, we were too well provided. In addition to all this some of the packs bulged with treasured boxes of cigars or cartons of cigarettes, and some even were built mysteriously around bottles from the *estaminet*.

At Audruicq we were crowded onto a train of box cars which, we saw at once, were devoid of even the side benches which we had found in the cars on our previous journey. By the time the packs were banked against the end walls as seats and suspended from the shutter-bars and ceiling-beams, the information came that we were about to start. Lieutenant Bishop gave us our instructions: 'No man shall leave the car for any reason without further orders. The non-commissioned

officer in charge — that's you, Straight — shall see to this. There will be no shouting at the natives as we go through towns. No one must eat any part of his iron ration unless specifically ordered by an officer.'

By noon we were passing through the station near Calais, where we had entrained a few weeks before. At two o'clock, or about as we reached Boulogne, we had begun to consider seriously when we were going to eat. At Étaples, the army school center, we looked with interest at the miles of barracks that stretched beside the track, and commented on the red mud of the river Canche. Frequently we got glimpses of the sea, but it only tantalized us to see so much water, that might have been used for bathing purposes, going to waste. By the time we reached the mouth of the Somme the only thought in our minds was, 'When do we eat?' Several of the most ravenous members of the platoon discovered almost simultaneously that the crackers, the size of an oyster cracker, from their iron ration had come out through holes in their cloth bags and suggested that they might as well eat them, since they were useless to save if they were dirty. Others discovered that in setting down their packs they had broken the can of corned beef which they contained, and called to the sergeant's attention the fact that it would spoil if kept in that condition. Some produced private stores of Maconichie rations — assorted vegetables in water — or hunks of bread, and I brought out a few of the cakes of nut ration which I had saved for some such emergency ever since I left the States. But it was a dismal and unsatisfactory meal. About seven o'clock the track turned inland again, and at midnight we passed through Doullens, the important railway center of the Department of the Somme. At one

o'clock we stopped at Mondicourt — I found out the name of the place later — having completed the easiest part of our journey.

It took some time and much swearing and bellowing to get the crowd untangled, for the arrangement of sleepers on the floor had been very intricate. The row of men nearest the end wall had lain on their backs with their heads upon the row of packs against the wall, and with their legs wide apart upon the floor. The next row lay between the outspread legs, and pillowed their heads upon the stomachs of the first. The third row lay between the legs of the second. This pattern worked from both ends toward the middle of the car, where the feet of the last rows intermingled hopelessly.

Not a light was visible or allowed in the train yard; in fact the whole of northern France between the front and the sea was lightless at night; only the front was illuminated. When every one was finally sure whose feet he was standing on, the search for packs began. That, too, took time, but when every one had found his 'luggage,' the outfit formed in a column of squads beside the train.

As we began to march, the rain, which had fallen nearly all day and had let up only during the evening, resumed operations with renewed intensity. Every one was too tired and hungry to say much, so we plodded along sullenly, hitching at our pack-straps and shifting our rifles from shoulder to shoulder. One moment the soft, cold darkness pressed down upon us from every side and the only sound was the endless regular clatter of heavy-shod feet accompanied by the rattle of bayonet scabbards, beating in slower time than the hurried ripple of the rain. The next, came

the brilliant flash of a parachute flare floating slowly down far ahead, and accompanying it there blossomed out a throbbing roar which rose and spread in impersonal clatter of imprecation as the light moved, and then, when it had fallen, boomed on and on, fainter and fainter until the marching rhythm predominated once more. Again and again the light rose and fell, the roar burst out and shrank away; and ever as the light sank it flashed the rushing shadows of the trees that walled the unbending road endlessly on and on, over the marching river of men and swiftly past them into the empty glistening fields on either side. After each rush of shadow, each beating of the distant guns, the silence became more profound than before. 'The front,' some one whispered — though he might have said it out loud — 'The front! The front!' went the word along the column, and then came silence again.

Suddenly the spell of the scene, which had but one answer for us, broke and was gone. A fife and drum corps of Canadians had entered the regimental column at the head of our company, and as it burst into a shrill, rattling tune every fallen head snapped up, every lagging knee stiffened, and a swing of life thrilled down the line. The fifes ended and the players began to sing:

I'm waiting for a shell,
(— Give us a whizz-bang —)
I'm waiting for a shell.
I don't care
If it's round or square,
Or if it hits the parapet
Or bursts in air,
I'm waiting for a shell,
(— Give us a whizz-bang —)
I'm waiting for a shell,

For I want to go to Blighty
Where the sisters change your nighty,
When the right shell comes along.

As we splashed along after the first halt, the entertainment continued:

Don't sigh-e-e-e,
Don't cry-e-e;
Wipe the tear,
Baby dear,
From your eye-e-e.
So long, old top
For I can't stop,
Good-bye, Baby dear,
Good-bye-e-e.

But even these cheering songs and the shrilling of the fifes could not prevent the killing weight of the over-heavy packs from dragging us into wordless exhaustion before the halt came.

This time we did not arrange our helmets upon the ground as rocking-chairs to keep us out of the mud, nor did we search for stones to sit upon. We simply dropped by the roadside, whatever the depth of the mud, and sat still until the shrilling of the whistle to proceed. Then we pulled each other up, walked stiffly until our joints loosened, and plodded hopelessly on. At three-thirty we turned to the left on a road that led off from that straight path to the front, but we were too weary now to be interested in a change of direction. About four o'clock faint daylight began to reveal the landscape through the rain. The halts became more frequent as the time dragged on, but the pace fell at every renewal of the march, and the heads of the marchers sank lower, for many were almost asleep.

By the time that what motion was left to us had become entirely automatic, an English sergeant-major came up to the company, which now with Company 'C' had the road to itself, having dropped off the rest of the regiment at the various towns through which it had passed.

'How much farther to the billets?' asked the captain.

'Billets,' the word sounded good, for it meant a place to sleep.

'Half a kilo, sir.'

The half-kilometer seemed to be seven, but we reached its end eventually. The fourth platoon turned into a little yard and invaded the barn. We dropped our packs anywhere, and, relieved of the load, stepped about for a moment feeling as if we were flying, but soon many of the men sank down to sleep.

'Tea,' came the word — we were in the British area. 'Hot tea.' A line formed at the company kitchen where the tea was being dispensed, and we broke our long fast with the hot liquid unpleasantly loaded with rum.

Just as I was returning to the barn I heard Straight call, 'Hi, come in here. Amatetti's off his head. Send some one for Bishop!' That almost made me hurry, and inside I found several men holding the little Italian, who, delirious from exhaustion, was writhing about, foaming at the mouth, and trying to get at his bayonet.

'Oh! You can't hold me, you damn Boche!' he screamed. 'You shan't kill my lieutenant. I won't let you! Keep away from him, keep that knife away! Hi, I'll stick you, you pig! You shan't kill my lieutenant!'

Suddenly he seemed to have the knife and tried to lunge with it. 'Ha! Take that! He's down. The pig! Oh! The devil!' Then the mood changed to a tearful one. 'Oh! Don't kill my lieutenant. I love my lieutenant. Do—o—o—n't!' He ended in a shriek, was silent a moment, and then writhed through the same cycle again. His lieutenant came and tried to quiet him, until at last the fellow slept and could be carried off to the ambulance.

'That's devotion for you,' we said, touched by his spirit in the presence of that cluster of threatening, visionary Boches. 'He'll show the real stuff, too, when his turn comes. Bishop deserves it, too.'

The rum in the tea had taken but five minutes to give me an unpleasant headache. I picked out a spot where the rain did not come through the roof, lay down, and slept until noon.

CHAPTER V

BRIGADED WITH THE BRITISH

FROM a distance, when one was fortunate enough to have the leisure for getting to a distance, Sombrin appeared to nestle into the depression between the long billows of the multi-shaded fields as if it were but the merest speck of a village. Perhaps it wasn't much of a village as villages go, for one can hardly call an assembly of thirty dwellings and two hundred people large, but at least to the seven hundred Americans who awoke there late in the morning of Tuesday, May 14th, it presented possibilities of almost the entire range of novelties and discomforts.

We drilled daily — that was our work — but we were so familiar with drill now that it had ceased to be a matter of comment. What if we did get up at five-thirty and appear on the field with full packs at seven? We were used to it.

The half-mile hike to the field was made interesting by the presence of a long train of British motor lorries which parked in the road. The skirmish maneuver, bayonet drill, and dummy grenade practice were all enlivened by the constant passage of airplanes so close over our heads that we felt that we could tear their wings by merely raising our bayonets, for the ground assigned to us was on the outer edge of an airdrome from which large numbers of planes went to the front daily. Sometimes a big shell from a Boche battery thirty miles away would come cooling through the air, strike in Saulty, four kilometers south, and raise a great column of earth higher than the intervening

windmills. Once when we began to dig a dummy trench system in the field across the road, much to the detriment of the clover crop, the owners nearly engaged us in battle. During the rests we would besiege the canteen attached to the truck train on the road. These were the things that enlivened the drills.

What we saw about Sombrin and the neighboring towns in the evenings, during the night tours of guard duty and on Sunday excursions, was what we talked about and remember. The inhabitants of the town were undoubtedly tired of troops — as well they might have been after four years of military infestation — so that in most things they were ungracious. But there was one person, whom I met upon a tour of guard duty, who was quite otherwise.

I was cold, so the corporal of the relief that was about to go off duty wakened me without trouble, though it was one o'clock in the morning. I clambered about the uneven floor of the barn used as the guard quarters, arousing the men of my watch, whose positions I had noted before turning in. Finally they were assembled, all grumbling, and marched to their posts throughout the sleeping village. I returned along the line to the guard-house, answering every challenge with 'Corporal of the guard' and advancing to be recognized — a slow process. No sooner was I seated than there came a call from post seven, at the farther end of the town. I hurried to the place, which was near our company headquarters, and found the sentinel vainly attempting to persuade an obstinate woman to extinguish a lamp. My arguments were ineffectual. She did not appear as anxious about the possibility of attracting a 'Jerry plane' as we were. Finally I opened the window and took the lamp. When I reached the guard-

house again I was mentally much warmer, but physically colder than ever, for the white moonlit mist of early morning has a peculiar chill.

I walked up and down the court in a vain effort to get warm, keeping careful watch upon my radiolite so that I should not permit the corporal of the next relief to sleep a moment too long.

A properly shaded light appeared in the kitchen of the house. The lieutenant was awakened by it and came out to see if all was well. It was.

Another footstep followed his. The mistress of the house, a young, hard-working woman, came to the door with a cup in her hand — I could just see it in the moonlight.

'Will the soldier have a cup of coffee?' she asked pleasantly. He would and did, but felt in his pocket for a coin.

'It is for you,' she said, refusing payment.

When the lieutenant returned, there was a cup for him.

When the relief came in, there were cups for them.

The night had lost its chill.

'Roll packs and prepare for a change of station at seven o'clock,' came the instructions one noon. We began to get ready with a rush for our departure for a destination, as usual, unknown.

Since the authorities had observed, as we had, that our packs had been too heavy on previous marches, provisions were made for lightening them and we were obliged to decide once more what were luxuries and what necessities. Each man laid aside one of his two blankets, his extra suit of underclothes, his extra O.D. shirt, his book or his box of cigars, his winter gloves,

his home-knit sweater, and any bulkier personal property, to be made into a squad bundle. Each squad leader laid out the eight blankets together, put the other articles upon them, rolled them up tightly, bound them with wire or rope, and identified the roll by marking on the outer blanket with indelible pencil. Squad bundles became an institution in the regiment after that. At every change of area they were moved by truck and dumped at the destination in huge company piles from which each squad might extract its own if it could. Often they burst open and all their contents were lost. Sometimes they reached great size when one of the men took a chance in entrusting a violin or banjo to his squad collection. But whatever trouble they caused, they were worth it, for they gave us something to look forward to, like mail from home.

'Just wait till I get to the roll, boys. I've got a clean suit of unders there that'll make a new man of me. And that book's in it, too. I'll let you have it soon,' was the type of remark frequently made about them.

That afternoon I had my hair clipped close to my head, as many of the fellows did, on the theory that a short crop would be easier to care for under the conditions of trench life which we thought were in immediate store for us. It was not long before we discovered that our scheme had its drawbacks, for the thirty-five ounces of steel in our helmets pressed the net linings unmercifully into our unprotected scalps. But after our scalps were toughened, we became accustomed to trimmed hair and kept it short — not clipped — like a well-mowed lawn, for then we could 'brush our hair with a towel' if we had to.

By five o'clock every one in the platoon was ready. The Lewis guns and cases of ammunition were loaded

upon limbers, each man had made his pack, the squad rolls were piled in the billet. Mess was served early so that the kitchen might set out ahead, since it could not travel as fast as the column. Just before leaving, the mess sergeant discovered, as he often did, that he had more food than he could carry, so he sent the overflow to the platoons, that each man might lug some. The neatly prepared packs had to be unstrapped to receive the new load. Some men drew six-pound tins of corned beef; some, large pats of butter, wrapped only in oiled paper; some, round cheese; some, cardboard jars of marmalade — articles as easy to carry in a pack as an inflated basket-ball or a bag of cracked eggs. We ate all we could at once, traded some to the mistress of the billet for bars of chocolate, and carried only the butter and corned beef. It must have been good butter — at any rate, it didn't melt for two days.

Completing preparations before we were due to start was a mistake. It gave the men a bit of leisure during which six disappeared. They had to be sent for — at the *estaminet*, of course. Several of them were well into the happy stage of intoxication. They had to remain behind.

We proceeded to a point near Barly, where we turned off the road, and, just at dusk, moved in column of twos, through the fields, to a hollow where the limbers had deposited the Lewis guns and ammunition. Each man grabbed up a part of this heavy material from the pile and ran on, staggering under the added weight, to regain the column, which was continually broken and became more and more disorganized as darkness came on. After what seemed an hour of incessant spurts we crossed a road, struggled through a passage in a band of barbed wire, and dropped into the end of a trench.

It was all a practice maneuver, for Barly was fifteen kilometers from the front, but we conducted ourselves as if we were in the forward line, since in the intense darkness and unfamiliar surroundings, under a sky echoing with the distant bombardment and restless with the beams of anti-aircraft searchlights, we had no difficulty in imagining what the real thing might be like. We followed the traversed trench, dug in the outline of a dovetailed boxboard, until ordered to stop at the end of our section. The lieutenant passed through to reconnoiter his line, retired to his command post, and soon sent out instructions, through the sergeants, as to the number of traverses which each squad was to occupy. The corporals arranged their squads according to their own notions of what was best, appointed watches, half on and half off, and proceeded to lie down or circulate about according to their inclination. Toward midnight the powerful double-tremored hum of a Jerry plane was heard, and the core of concentrated rays from the hidden searchlights in the vicinity wavered about over our heads. The batteries opened fire on the center of light, but the hum went on ceaselessly and died out in the distance toward the rear — toward Calais. Later in the night friendly planes took the sky and moved up and down among the brilliant constellations, their fore and tail lights burning and shifting like new, strangely swift planets, in an irregular course. The dampness of the fields settled into the trenches and the single sleepers, rolled up in their blankets and shelter halves at intervals along the trench bottom, stirred uneasily and pulled the olive drab closer and closer about their faces. Every now and then some one passing through would stumble over them or knock down their rifles from their leaning position on the fire

step, but they would repel this disturbance, as they did the cold, by an additional twitch to the blanket, and the runner would pass on without having awakened them.

At four o'clock the lieutenant came through to arouse every one to 'stand-to,' for it was important at the front that every man should be on the alert during the period of half-light about sunrise, during which the enemy was most likely to attack. He brought with him a jug of rum — the rum ration we were entitled to as part of a British brigade — and poured out a half-inch of the heavy brown liquid into the cups of the men who wanted to still their chattering teeth by its warmth.

At seven we were told that the game was over. We climbed on to the clover-sodded parapet, shook the earth out of our blankets, rolled our packs, and hurried to the company kitchen which we discovered in a near-by grove, close beside a little military graveyard where the irregular rows of brown crosses stood silently, illuminated by brilliant tricolor cockades and British regimental badges. The hot coffee and oatmeal put added life into us, so that when the time came we were ready to snap into formation for the return march. Lieutenant Bishop led the singing as we clattered off at route step, and when we pulled into Sombrin again at noon, we had forgotten how little sleep we had had in the last twenty-four hours, the weight of the equipment, and the cold of the four o'clock dampness.

The division was being trained rapidly in every possible phase of warfare which the time would permit. The occupations of the trench areas which we had performed were one part of this schooling; another was the sending of officers and sergeants to the front for

observation. Straight went up with the Black Watch near Arras, and, evading the protection of the brigade headquarters dugout, spent a day and a night at the real front getting acquainted with the Scots, who talked about everything but the war, but showed him by example the proper way to dive into a dry shell hole.

A valuable part of our training was the time which we spent on the rifle range, for though it did not breed expert marksmanship it gave us thorough familiarity with the weapon. The range consisted simply of three trenches dug in a field parallel with the face of a low bluff, two of them respectively thirty-five and fifty yards away from it, and the other at its foot with the parapet facing the parapets of the first two. One man would enter the butts, for such was the function of the trench at the foot of the bank, with a bag of empty beef tins which he then set up, one at a time, on small sticks on the parapet of the trench. Ten men would enter one of the firing trenches, each one opposite a can, and blaze away with single shots or rapid fire, as ordered, aiming at his own can until it fell from the stick, which might not be until the fifth or sixth hit, and then turning on the can of one of his neighbors. The man in the butts experienced the real sensations of trench life as the bullets cracked over his head, or sank into the soft earth of the parapet, and the cans fell clattering at his feet with the hot, mangled bullets still inside.

While some fired, the rest of the platoon sat around in the alfalfa wearing their gas masks on endurance trials or cleaning their ever carefully tended rifles.

Barney Lakritz and his Polish friend Plausky provided the daily comedy on the march back from the range, for owing to their many minor misdemeanors

they were usually detailed to carry back the empty cartridge shells.

'Hold up your end of the bag, Barney,' said Plausky one morning, as he dropped his.

'Corporal Kinkel, make him hold it up,' wailed Barney, letting the bag down in the road and spilling half its contents.

'Now, you lazy fool, pick 'em up!' snarled Plausky.

'You're so lazy yourself your mother asked 'em to draft you! Ya.'

'Fat pig! You were drafted by mistake. You can't walk.'

'Pick 'em up!' Plausky reverted to his old wail. Barney began, picked up half of what had fallen out, and then kicked the bag over again.

'Skinny damn Bowery hound!' he parried, and Plausky, blubbering as he saw the corporal starting toward him, finished the task.

So it went, all along the road into town. It often took an officer and three non-coms to get the pair to carry the bag a few kilometers; once, in fact, Lieutenant Miles carried the non-coms' rifles while they urged the two squabbling men to their task. Wasted labor? No. For we had somehow to get them used to doing what they were told.

On Sundays Sombrin came to life and the women appeared parading to mass in their resplendently clean though threadbare clothes, accompanied by little girls simply dressed in black, and tall, lean boys, made taller by high-crowned, shiny-vizored caps and long rows of brass buttons down the fronts of their blue suits. The male inhabitants observed the day only as one of rest and stayed at home on their doorsteps smoking and conversing. Our men were but little more

interested in religious affairs. Some of the Catholics attended the special military mass, but the Jews had no services and the Protestants had only one. I attended it. That is, I went to the schoolroom in the *mairie* where the service was scheduled to be held. A little later, and just before the time announced, a man from Company 'C' appeared.

'The service here?' he asked.

'I thought so. Let's wait and see.'

We did. A British captain-chaplain arrived ten minutes late.

'This the place?' he asked.

We said that it was and watched him while he set up a portable altar on the teacher's desk.

'I'll wait awhile for more men to come,' he said, and talked with us for half an hour. But no more men came. We had the service, impressive in its simple sincerity, to ourselves, and felt indeed that here, three being gathered together in His name, He would be also.

Cleanliness being next to godliness, it may now be fitting to speak of our arrangements for keeping clean. At first we took our washing to the women of the town, but later, in compliance with an order which warned us to be always ready to move at an hour's notice, we were obliged to do it ourselves. As for bathing, we had the privilege of a weekly shower at the military shower bath that was rigged in an old barn close to the church. There were too many men for the amount of water allowed and one could only get 'soaped up,' never really bathed. Private bathing parties were held in the orchard opposite the billet where two men would get together with two pails borrowed from the kitchen. One would strip and wash and the other would dash the water over him. Then number one would dress,

fill the pails again, and douse number two. It was a great system, but it was hard to avoid an audience, or to obtain the pails, the water, or the time.

On Friday, June 7th, I returned to the billet from such a bathing party to find Corporal Nolan conducting a cootie hunt in his shirt. Though the bag was not large, the success of the hunt alarmed us all, for we had not expected to find cooties so far from the front or in such civilized surroundings. Others began to conduct similar explorations and I joined the crowd, unfortunately with equal success.

'You've taken even more baths than I,' said Nolan. 'I don't feel so bad when I see your luck.' But all I could say was, '*C'est la guerre*' — and I set about boiling my shirt in company with Palmer and Eulert. Just as we hung the heavy wet garments up to dry, Lieutenant Bishop appeared.

'Be ready to move in an hour,' he said.

The wet shirts had to be rolled up hurriedly in the squad bundle, and they came to light a month later, still wet, in Village Indien, near Badonviller, in Lorraine. For this time we really moved.

CHAPTER VI

HIKES AND MORE HIKES

Out of the square, ragged-edged, blue-lined envelope, stained with the mud of Girecourt, canceled with the military censor's mark, and bearing in the corner, in lieu of a stamp, the words 'Soldier's mail,' I draw my own much-read letter. Its soft, grid-ruled paper reminds me of the street vendor's little stand where I bought it, picking it out from among the coils of yellow lighter tape, rosary beads, perforated envelopes, and knife guard chains; of the argument with the vendor over the price; of the gray-walled and windowless but quaint village street on which the wagon was drawn up. The stains of dirt recall the rain-soaked pup tent where I sat to write, and the brown charred streak shows me where I thrust it too near the candle that flickered low in the wind. The place where the writing grows gradually fainter and fainter until the pen scratches show, and then suddenly becomes black again, brings to mind a search in my blouse for a box of ink tablets and a reach for my canteen to fill my pen. The small, closely packed writing tells me again that in those days paper was scarce because it could not be kept in condition long in a pack and because whoever had any at once became the center of borrowing.

The letter tells me all that even before I read it again, and when I do read it there appear between the lines the pictures which I did not sketch at the time. The incidents I did not mention blend with those I did; the long, full, sunlit and rain-soaked days of march and travel unfold themselves once more.

It is five o'clock in the afternoon. We have left Sombrin (Pas de Calais) and are plodding along the road beyond Warluzel into the beckoning rays of the late afternoon sun that widen between the stems of the poplar row on our left. The platoons are separated at intervals of fifty yards, as they would be if we were nearer the front, so that we may become accustomed to maintaining our proper interval. To-day the third platoon leads the company column and we are second in line. To-morrow it will be our turn to lead and the third will be double-timing in the rear. We are not tired yet, so there is a medley of sound as some squads are singing and some are counting time. The company flag at the head of the third platoon adds a bit of color to the scene.

As corporal I march on the left of the front rank of the squad. Bill Palmer, the grumbler who never shirks a job, is beside me on the right. Beyond him is Sam Buchner, always pleasant until his leg begins to bother him; and beyond him still, Eulert, agreeable as long as he has his own way. Behind him is Chavelle, silent and moody — does he think the rest of the squad is below his class? I wish I knew. He talks enough to me when we are alone — too much, perhaps — but he has nothing to say on the march. On his left is Julis, who chatters and smiles whether we respond or not. Beside him Gertisser plods along, always cheerful, pleasant, and uncomplaining; and just behind me is D'Orta, his big smile lighting up the squad, and his hearty laugh, crude jokes, and boisterous song, 'Oh, Marie,' reverberating down the column.

'A real American flag would look better than that jigger there,' says Bill, pointing to the company flag.

I notice, as he speaks, that the captain is carrying

wound round its stick one of the cheap Fourth-of-July flags which sell for about fifteen cents at home.

'Yes,' I agree, 'Captain Breckenridge evidently thinks so too. See that little cane of his!'

'Let's hope he opens it up.'

It is not long before our hope is fulfilled. We are likely to think that flag-waving is a strenuous, emotional, and useless pastime, but we hurrah — yes, we really do — as the captain sticks the flag into a rifle barrel, where, fluttering high at the head of our company, it snaps out its words of cheer over the column: 'You're in the American army,' it says to us. 'You're on the way to the American area. No more Tommies with all their boasting; no more bum bacon for you.'

I take out my own small silk flag from my pocketbook and tie it to the muzzle of my rifle, for I do not want the fourth platoon to be outdone.

That was the only time I ever saw our colors carried on a service march in France. Surely I saw them on parade in Paris or flying from the window of the regimental headquarters, but never did they mean more than those two little flags dangling from the rifle barrels at our shoulders.

That night we slept in billets in Boquemaisons, thirteen kilometers from Sombrin. Chavelle and I shared blankets, but the late arrival of Corporal Schneider violently drunk, at about midnight, drove us out of the barn. We tried the orchard, where every sheltered spot was occupied. Too sleepy to set up our tent, we searched farther and found an abandoned chicken-house, where we arranged ourselves diagonally across the floor, commenting hotly all the while on the idiocy of getting drunk. It doesn't take many attempts

to sleep with a drunken man to convince one of the desirability of prohibition.

The next morning finds us on the road early, making good time. 'Whew! but it is hot for only the 8th of June! Isn't the landscape dull? Isn't the road monotonous? Fields, fields, nothing but level fields, and rows of poplars stretching off over flatness interminably, and little villages all alike, and scattered *bois*, looming high in the heat mirage, and the clatter and bang of bayonet scabbards, and the ever-curling, low cloud of yellow dust that laps about our shoulders. Don't the roads ever turn; haven't they hills and valleys anywhere in France; don't they ever plant more than four trees in a group? What a country! Isn't it hot? Can you imagine how a stream big enough to bathe in would look?

'What is it? Yah! Bo! A valley, a valley full of trees. What a luxury just to see a valley. And the chances are that it has water in it. Mebbe we'll get a "fall out" near the brook. Whoever saw a valley that shape with so much foliage at the bottom that didn't have a stream to keep it all watered?

'It sure looks good! Downhill we go. What a treat!

'Guess they fooled us. See that other company coming in there at the crossroad and going up the hill. Gosh! We've got to trail them and eat their dust. Ump! Ump! Hey, Andy, behind there! Stick your piece under my pack and boost and get Sam to do the same for you. It'll lift the weight off your shoulders going uphill. I knew that there was some catch in this. We just went down the blame hill so we could go up it again. What a pull! Look at those horses with the water wagon. It's all they can do to make it. That's all

the water we'll see this trip, and we won't see that, all canned up in a tank getting hot. Didn't you like the limejuice in your canteen? Rotten, eh! It strikes me as mighty good.'

We reach the top of the hill and see the major, followed by the head of the column, turning into a field. Two peasants are hurriedly milking the cows that occupy the far corner of the area near the fence. Not a drop of milk left for us, we find, when we try milking in our turn, as soon as we have stacked arms and fallen out. The people are evidently used to the habits of friendly armies.

While the kitchen force is opening the cans of hash and the marmalade jars, I slip away to the neighboring woods, force my way through the wall of bushes that edge them, and, entranced, enter the cool, airy quiet of the gray-pillared beech grove. I lie on my back, my feet high above my head, resting, just resting and rejoicing that I am alive. How quickly my mood changes! A few minutes ago I thought I had never seen a more unpleasant country, now I think I have never seen a more luxuriant or lovelier one.

The bugle blows, telling me that mess is ready, and I rush out, banging my mess-kit on my tin hat to spring the cover off.

We finish our nineteen kilometers at nine-thirty, and by ten o'clock Straight and I are asleep; rolled up together in our blankets and shelter halves under a wagon in the orchard. If it rains the wagon will cover us, and at this season, whatever the weather, the fresh air of outdoors is better than the breath-heated atmosphere of the stable billet.

At nine the next morning we leave Maizicourt (Somme), but it being Sunday, and because the feet

of all the men are becoming very tired with the continuous days of marching to which we are not yet wholly accustomed, we stop, shortly after noon, and pitch our tents in a field at Domleger, instead of going into billets. The town has apparently had no experience with the military during the war, for we are made very welcome, flags are waved by the people as we enter, we are asked into the houses and made much of, we can buy eggs and milk at low, non-army prices. When we are settled in the field and rested a bit, I produce my roll of adhesive tape and pocket scissors and begin to repair my feet, disposing of the blisters as best I can. My friends think it is a great idea, and gather round, so that before long I have a foot clinic with a steady flow of patients. The squad can of foot powder is soon exhausted, but the roll of tape holds out. It is good for some time longer, and while it lasts my foot clinic is a regular feature of hike life.

The next day, Monday, June 10th, we rest until after the noon mess and then set out, much revived, on the last stage of our journey to the railroad. At Ailly-le-Haut-Clocher we come to the rim of the Somme valley, and as we catch sight of the great flooded plain, verdant and luxurious, and the grand, blue bluffs fading off into the distance on the left, a shout goes up. We begin to sing, every squad a different tune. Bill hits up his old favorite:

Pray for sunshine, but always be prepared for rain.
Put all your pennies upon the shelf,
The almighty dollar will take care of itself.
Keep on smiling, there's bound to be a better day.
Save a little,
Spend a little,
Help the striving world a little.
Pray for sunshine, but always be prepared for rain.

The platoon joins in and carries the song a moment until the grand chorus of the battalion overpowers us. The people rush to the windows and the boys come out, clamoring for a chance to carry our rifles; aprons are waved frantically; and every one claps and shouts. We are all marching in time now of our own accord, we sing with a will and wave the felt hats which we have been carrying on our packs — for though we have tin hats which we wear for training, we have not yet graduated to the overseas cap. This is the song in which we voice our enthusiasm at seeing the river and our destination — the song that the A.E.F. taught all France:

Hail, hail, the gang's all here,
What the hell do we care?
What the hell do we care?
Hail, hail, the gang's all here.
What the hell do we care NOW.

Soon we are crossing the valley floor, the road stretching like a causeway across the flood which is everywhere divided by the protruding tops of the hedgerows. We halt for half an hour at six o'clock and dabble our feet in the water at the roadside. A great rainbow spans the valley and thunder-showers move up and down, several in sight at once, none of them disturbing us in the least. We scramble into column and hurry on, past many silent *poilus* sitting meditatively on the bridges fishing with long poles. They never once turn to look at us, but keep their eyes always fixed upon their motionless bobs. They do not catch anything. We reach Long, cross the railroad, and soon enter Long-pré, where a pleasant sight greets our eyes. Four of the 'bearded ones' are sitting inside the open window of an *estaminet*, eating huge, red

strawberries from a heaping bowl. As we pass, we groan, laugh, and smack our lips and they hold up samples of the tempting fruit.

Our fifty-kilometer hike is over. They might have supplied us transportation all the way, but we needed the experience to condition us. Sam Buchner has proved his inability to stand the strain of marching and is assigned to drive a water-cart, so that now my squad contains a blank file and Gertisser comes into the front rank.

We turn into a side street and stand long, waiting our turn to enter a small barn which is being used as a warehouse, for the purpose of giving up our British rifles and receiving back our American Enfields. Covered with grease, the new pieces are difficult to handle, but the small boys of the town help us out and make fortunes for themselves by selling us old rags to wipe them with. At eleven o'clock we march to the train yard and, in the half-light given by the moon behind a wall of cloud, are assigned to box cars. The first task of the twenty-six men who are to occupy the car in which I find myself is to shovel out the filthy, packed, straw bedding left by the recently departed equine occupants and to scatter a fresh layer. Our next is to load large boxes of hard-bread, canned corned beef, and canned hash. Then we lie down on the cobblestone pavement of the yard to sleep, or sit and talk all the long night until four o'clock when the word to get aboard is finally given. There is no cheering now, for we are chilled and stiff. We fit ourselves into the car, sitting up round the wall or lying packed on the floor, and are all fast asleep when the train starts.

We wake to find the cars stopped at a small station

and all rush to the faucet to wash. During the daylight hours the train rattles on through beautiful country — past many vineyards and many moist, green pastures. Toward evening we cross the Seine, and, just as it is getting dark, gaze for an instant up the long artificial pool at Versailles to the façade of the palace in the distance. The next morning we are out on the flat cars where the rolling stock of the battalion is secured, naming the stations that we pass.

'Here we come to a burg,' some one calls.

'It's Sens, according to my map,' a comrade answers.

'Nix, nix, the map's too small. I can see the sign. It says "Hommes."'

'"Hommes," you nut. That's the toilet sign. There's one on every station. Where have you been all these years?'

We pass the station and see the sign, Vernoy. Gertisser, who is keeping a list of towns — not a diary — notes it down.

We leave Sens, Troyes, and Montierender behind us and come at last through a long tunnel into a fine, mountain-flanked valley, where we pass Joinville and Poissons, and wind up and up among the hills to Gondrecourt, the center of the first American training-area. At the station we see the first Americans from any division but our own that we have met in France. 'What outfit, buddies?' they shout. Another first for us — we have not heard that immortal cry before. There follows a long coast down grade, through many tunnels. At times we slacken speed so that some of us are able to jump off and pick the wild strawberries that line the track as thickly as the empty beef tins that border every railroad we have traveled on. After

dark we pass through Toul, which is only a name to us as yet, and are soon in Nancy, where we stop at the much-bombed *gare* and so have an opportunity to engage the French sentinel in conversation. He takes the cartridge out of the chamber of his piece and shows it to us. *Quel sentinel!* But we do not take advantage of his innocence. Some of us sleep on the seats of the wagons and some in the box cars, while I roll up underneath a water cart that creaks and bangs with every lurch of the train. Still, I sleep soundly, and am ready to wake when at four o'clock in the morning the train arrives at Châtel-sur-Moselle, in the department of the Vosges.

We realize that we are back near the war again, for the first thing that catches our eye is an airplane overhead, surrounded by a ring of shell bursts. Off we march through the city and along stream-bordered roads to Domèvre, where we stop to rest and mess. The townspeople do not receive us cordially, for they hate all armies. They were overrun by the German invasion of 1914 and by the French liberation of the same year, and now they tell us that they dislike all soldiers equally, and make it difficult for us to buy the eggs and milk for which we are always searching. A brook flows past the town, as we have observed, and about twenty of us hurry to it after mess. We find a pool where we strip and plunge in and disport ourselves happily on the bank rollicking in the cleanliness and freedom, like boys at the 'ole swimmin' hole.' Perhaps we are more boyish than boys, for we take our swim regardless of the women who are working in the fields close to us and who fail to take notice of our shouted commands to withdraw. What a difference the uniform — or is it the hard physical grind that

compels us to take advantage of all chances to play — makes in one's attitude?

That evening finds us pup-tenting at Fontenay, eighteen kilometers from Châtel.

The next noon we arrive at Girecourt and pitch tents beside the pond in the park of a once elegant, but now abandoned, estate where we are screened from the road by a high wall. We put our feet in repair, and, during the rest of the first afternoon, search everywhere for more of the luscious round cream cheeses which we are just beginning to find are a distinctive product of the region. The next day we drill a little while, so that we shall not forget we are in the army, and when the good weather which has favored our trip at last deserts us, return to the camp to dig drain ditches around our pup tents. The weather continues to clear and shower alternately. We spend the rest of the day opening our squad bundles — mine is partially burst and Bill Palmer's stuff is lost — and washing our clothes. We swim the brook and revel in the abundance of water, though we curse the showers that keep our clothes from drying.

All day Monday it pours, so that when we come to roll our packs and make up our squad bundles after the evening mess, everything is soaked with water and mud. We are now so near the front that we shall have to march at night. It is a long grind — this first of the series of all-night marches — that tires me more than anything I have yet done. At Rambervillers it seems as though I could hardly go on — but go on I do, sometimes amused by Cook Riley's drunken story of his brother's march with the Forty-Second in the winter of '17–'18, sometimes passive and without thought. The 2 A.M. lunch gives me a little more

U.S. Official Drawing

'THE FIRST THING THAT CATCHES OUR EYE IS AN AIRPLANE OVERHEAD, SURROUNDED BY A RING OF SHELL BURSTS'

energy, which is soon consumed. At the halts I flop down in the road, and after them it takes five minutes for the stiffness to work out of my legs so that I can resume march without limping. When we reach Nossoncourt, our destination for the night, I am staggering about, advancing automatically, weaving in and out of the column wherever my legs carry me. We billet at 4 A.M., and I climb up a long ladder to a hayloft, crawl over the summit of the mountain of hay into the valley beyond, out of sight near the eaves, and am lost to the world until noon. I awake as strong as ever, glad to find that I was only tired, not exhausted.

Tuesday evening and the early hours of Wednesday morning give us a new interest, for on the road we pass the columns of the Forty-Second Division which we are relieving; exchanging greetings in the dark and comparing notes on our home towns. At 3 A.M. we move down from the high land where the road has led us, through the moonlit band of night mist, to a lower level, and strike off into a field that seems, in the white, irresolute light, to slope infinitely into the dark valley, beyond which rises a sullen range of high hills. So steep does the field appear that I am almost fearful lest we should roll off into the blackness, but I open my pack with the rest and bunk down, omitting, in my desire to sleep, to think of setting up a tent. Straight shakes out his blanket and is convulsed with a fit of sneezing, for a box of pepper which he carried, rather than throw it away, has burst, making his bedding impossible for the night. The field gradually becomes quiet as the couples fall soundly asleep, and the German observation balloon, hanging in the air not far away, seems, though it cannot see us, to keep a sinister watch.

Morning finds us gazing down on the city of Baccarat (Meurthe et Moselle) in the now pleasant valley. We spend the day swimming in the Meurthe river, exploring the city — where we gaze in awe on the few Rainbow (Forty-Second) Division men distinguished by the first gold service stripes we have seen — and examining the dynamited bridge and the damaged church. I replenish my stock of adhesive tape and secure a bottle of iodine so that my foot clinics shall not have to be discontinued.

We leave the city at about eight o'clock and by the time we reach Bertrichamps are, with the assistance of our blotting-paper, issue raincoats, completely soaked by the downpour which has overtaken us. At this town we turn off the main highway to Raon-l'Étape on to a less-traveled road that winds precipitously through the woods. The darkness is intense. We have to keep our hands on the back of the man ahead so as not to lose or to walk on him. We can only follow the road by watching the gap in the foliage overhead where a river of lighter sky seems to flow along a tortuous course. We pass small, permanent camps which are just being evacuated by companies of the Rainbow Division. No lights are seen — the world is wholly dark, but wholly awake. We enter a small village where a gas alarm bell, that stands out in silhouette on the corner of a white house, tells us, without speaking, that at last we are approaching the danger area. We become more impressed, more tired, more silent, and plod on anxiously, wondering where we shall end this night.

At about one o'clock, as my radiolite tells me, we turn from the road to a rough trail that is so narrow we have to shift into a column of twos. We advance up

the steep incline, over the loose stones which roll under our feet at every step, with the utmost difficulty. Some officer produces a flashlight, which he feels safe in using in the woods, and its beams, reflecting on the long vistas of wet tree stems below us to the left, show that we are on the side of a precipitous hill. It seems as if we must be lost in such a wilderness, as if we were going merely for the sake of keeping on, but our guide appears to know the way.

We leave the path and stumble along some duckboards. Suddenly a candle flares up inside an oiled-paper window just ahead of us, where we had supposed there was nothing but an empty forest. We enter a standard wood hut and scramble for places on the balsam boughs that are spread along the wooden shelf which serves as a common bed.

'This is the place we have been traveling toward ever since we left Sombrin,' says Lieutenant Bishop.

We have arrived. That is information enough for us. We do not care where we are or what manner of place it is. We light more candles, settle ourselves, blow them out, and roll over quickly. The torrential rain continues to beat on the roof above us, and the rats begin to rustle about, squeaking and contesting over the edibles in our packs, but we drop quickly asleep, and forget ——

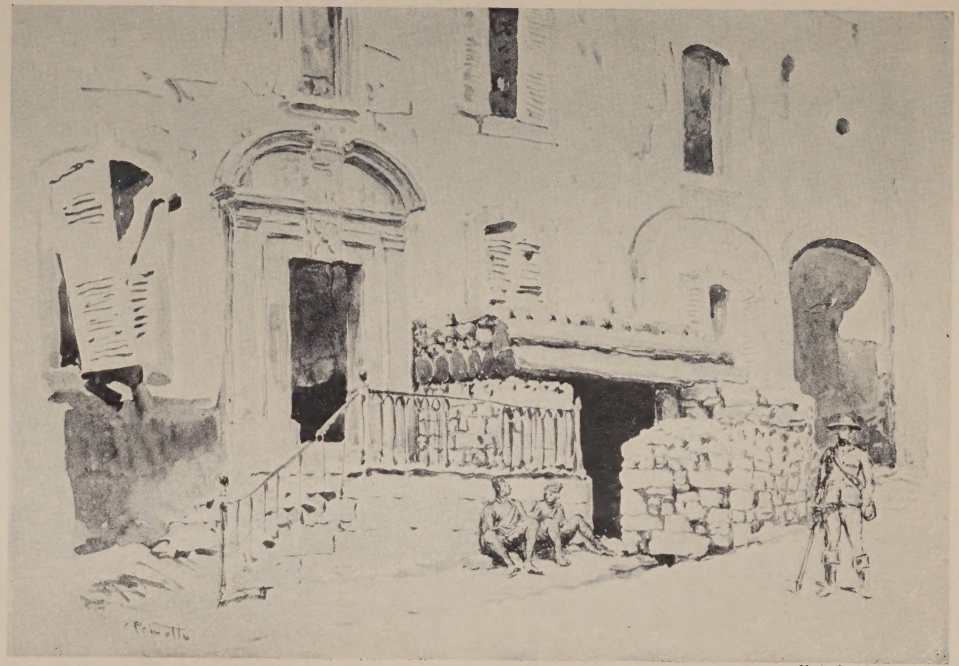
CHAPTER VII

THE REAL THING

'WHAT withered all the trees and grass down there?' I asked Sergeant Gordan as he dropped back from the head of the section.

I guessed that he would know all about it, for with several privates he had been ordered directly to the front, shortly after our arrival at Camp Ker Avor three days previously. He was to reconnoiter the position that we should occupy and familiarize himself with the conditions of trench life so that we might profit by his experience when we had rested sufficiently, after our long hike, to be ready to 'go up.' Of course he had to dispense with the rest himself, but that was all in the game.

We had remained in the forest-buried military village for two nights and days, passing our time in sleeping, washing clothes, playing cards, writing letters, or exploring the woods in search of unfamiliar flowers or hidden batteries, just as inclination moved us. Now, on the evening of June 21st, we were moving into our trench position. Outside Pexonne we had been surprised at the irregular pattern of great brown holes in the rich grass that floored an extensive abandoned orchard. In the village we had asked questions about the four-armed crosses on the doorposts of many of the houses, until we learned that they were Lorraine crosses, here used to indicate the existence of gas-proof *abris* (shelters) in the cellars. In Badonviller we had looked with genuine satisfaction at the war-wrecked church, crumbling bell-tower, and roofless, gaping-



U.S. Official Drawing

HOUSES IN BADONVILLER

The lower entrance admits to an *abri*, or shelter, made with sandbags and heavy timbers

windowed houses, for they gave us actual evidence of the often affirmed truth that the Germans had a particular aversion to churches and harmless villages.

Each platoon had divided into halves called sections, and each section was now moving in a column of twos so as to permit the passage of other troops and traffic. Between each of the sections thus formed, there intervened a hundred yards of bare roadway, the connection being maintained by two men walking together, who might pass on signals from either direction or stand at corners to indicate to the section following the direction which its predecessor had taken. I was unable to see any justification for our making the relief before sunset, while the visibility was yet excellent, when for many days previously, to avoid German aërial observation, we had moved abroad only at night. We 'got away with it,' I admit, and we were able to see our route, but that does not explain the performance which, to the critic in the ranks, wrong though he usually was, seemed unwise.

To our right lay a grassy hollow containing an orchard through which ran a small brook, but where — which seemed strange to us — the grass was withered to a yellowish brown like that of puffball spores, and all the orchard trees as well as the roadside cherry row were of the same desolate color with leaves dropping, though it was June. The trees on the higher ground to the left were normal. That strange sight prompted my question to Sergeant Gordan, who had joined us at Badonviller to act as guide, and who was now skirting the column telling every one how well he had eaten and drunk at the French mess just behind the front.

'Gas,' he said. 'The Boches keep the town soaked

with phosgene and mustard and the stuff settles in all the hollows, kills the trees and grass, and spoils the water in the brook. You can't even wash in that water 'ithout getting burned.'

'Nice fellows,' commented Kinkel. 'We'll never be able to get Barney to wash after this. Eh! Barney?'

'Aw. Lief off! Lief off, I say. It's not your bisness,' growled Barney, as every one laughed.

'Yes,' went on Gordan, 'it's no mistake your having your masks at the alert now. You may get into a gassy hollow any time.'

'Bullets are better than gas,' said Gertisser, uttering an opinion that grew on us as time went on. 'I'd rather stop a bullet any day than get a good whiff of gas. You don't know how it'll hurt you, and it sticks for life.'

At our next opportunity we tightened our mask satchels in their position on our chests and inspected our own masks, for the withered trees had taught us their lesson.

'There's the first-aid post,' Gordan remarked after an interval of a few minutes, pointing to a little doorway in the hill slope, over which there was a white sign bearing a red cross and the words '*Poste de Secours*.' A blue Ford ambulance with a red cross painted on the roof stood close against the white stones that bordered the tiny lawn and garden.

'Looks pleasant enough,' said some one.

'Yes, it don't! See that red on the blanket?' replied Gordan, pointing to the blanket over the door to keep out gas. 'It's blood.'

Just beyond there we came up with the rest of the company, halting in the shelter of a sunken road on one side of which was an *abri* marked P.C. (*poste de*

commande) and on the other a row of several numbered dugouts.

'Loosen packs and sit down,' came the word. We obeyed willingly, and just as Straight and I, who were comparing notes, found that the day, June 21st, was exactly two months from the day of our arrival in France, Lieutenant Bishop called me across the road to him.

'You're to act as sergeant after this, Ranlett,' he said. I grew warm under the collar with pleasure. It would make the writing of my next letter more interesting. 'We've been planning to make you for some time and we've just had the chance to send in the list. Your pay dates from June 1st. Let Duffy have your squad now and sew your chevrons on if you have any.'

'Yes, sir,' I answered; 'I bought some at Baccarat.' I had anticipated the promotion, for I knew that a general order had recently been promulgated requiring that all former members of the Third Officers' Training School at Camp Upton should be given sergeantcies as soon as opportunity offered. What form opportunity took I do not know, but it arrived at a curious moment, just before we entered the trenches. Corporal Duffy, who had been away at several specialists' schools to learn the use of the auto-rifle and other trench weapons and who consequently had no squad, took my old place at once.

We sat there in the concealment of the trees and the bank until dark, talking of many things.

At last, about ten o'clock, when the slow gang-rockets had begun their silent march upward from the invisible Boche lines, Private Leddy, a little red-headed, cock-sure fellow who had accompanied Gordan on his reconnaissance, came to guide us to our post.

We moved on silently in single file up to where the road ceased at the crest of the ridge, cut by a trench and wiped out in the maze of the suddenly transformed forest. We stepped down into the trench, which deepened from waist-high to neck-high as we proceeded, passed a cross *boyau*, looked wonderingly into a small dugout, which, from the number of wires at its entrance, appeared to be the telephone central office, and slipped and slid onward between the wet, muddy walls.

After a few minutes of this type of progress, we halted and the lieutenant came pushing back, followed by a Frenchman, to where Sergeant Loffman and I were urging on the rear of the column.

'As near as I can tell he wants a sergeant and three men for a listening-post,' he said. 'Loffman, you can pick out any three and go along.' The French sergeant, who was showing us how the trenches should be occupied, began to explain the duties of the listening-post to Loffman, who could not understand a word and became more and more dazed as the man proceeded. The lieutenant saw his confusion which he was making the most of.

'You've studied French, haven't you?' he asked me. I admitted that I had, and even volunteered the remark that I thought I could understand the Frenchman's instructions.

'You take it,' he said.

'Yes, sir.'

'Many happy returns,' said Loffman, and I saw that he had passed the buck to me very neatly.

I had read a lot about listening-posts. They were little pits way out near the enemy trenches where one heard all that went on in Germany. A German was

U.S. Official Drawing

A LISTENING POST, 'WHERE ONE HEARD ALL THAT WENT ON IN GERMANY'

This sketch might well have been made in the very trench I was in. See the barbed-wire, the sheltering roof of corrugated iron, and the niches filled with hand-grenades

likely to toss a grenade into them at any moment. They were easily surrounded by the enemy and cut off. The only comforting thing that I could recall was that, even if the Boche laid a barrage on your own trenches, he couldn't hit the listening-post because it was too near his lines.

With Palmer, Eulert, and Zinsley, led by the French sergeant, I turned to the left into a shallow trench that served to drain the water from the main trench, and proceeded about forty feet to the post — a round pit surrounded by a good breastwork of sandbags. Below the breastwork was a wooden bench. Below and behind the bench was a little submerged cell, five by five feet, floored with two duckboards.

The sergeant gave me his instructions which I interpreted with difficulty: 'Just keep an eye out for any excitement. If you see any one moving down front, shoot and then ask who it is.'

We all sat for some time staring about until our eyes became accustomed to the darkness and we could distinguish that we were on the upper edge of an abrupt hill slope, covered with an apparently impenetrable tangle of trees that had been shattered by shell fire. It was a weird scene in which we could make out nothing but wreckage. The whole landscape had been stirred topsy-turvy. How far away the Boche lines might be we did not know, though the gang-rockets rose only from a considerable distance. When we looked back, we could not make out even the parapet of our own trench nor distinguish the slightest sign of the existence of our comrades. Two of us stayed on the watch and two crawled into the shelter to sleep curled up in our overcoats on the muddy duckboards. At the end of every hour one of the watchers woke one of the

sleepers and exchanged places with him. So the rotation proceeded until four o'clock when the morning mist began to rise and the faint half-light told us that it was time for 'stand-to.' The Boche line was still invisible. We became more calm. We withdrew to the main trench where the platoon was all awake, peering inquiringly down into the valley.

'Hot coffee.' Two men from the company kitchen back near the P.C. brought it up in a marmite can — a large cylinder made like a fireless cooker to conserve the heat. We needed something to wake us up. Hot coffee took the place of the rum ration now that we were in the American sector. No, it did more than that, for I did not drink the rum, and I drank the cheering hot coffee on every possible occasion.

When it was full daylight and we had eaten the breakfast brought to us in containers just as the coffee had been, we began to look about us. The trench was a mere ditch, widened and made irregular by much use. The earth was a rich brick color, like New Jersey soil, which stained our clothing weirdly until it dried, and soaked into our canvas leggins so thoroughly that however much they were washed they always looked as if we had waded in blood. Behind the trench the leaf-covered floor of the forest of oak and beech stretched away smoothly, and below, in front, was the ruined slope of the hill. All our apprehension about the possible proximity of the enemy had been unfounded, for the trench was merely a night position, and the true front line was farther ahead in the valley.

We went down a jaggedly zigzagged *boyau* (a *boyau* is any trench running perpendicular rather than parallel to the front) to the bottom of the hollow, which was wholly covered with water-filled shell holes, and

emerged on an old road in whose bank was a dugout. We had not heard a shot fired or seen an airplane, since leaving Ker Avor, and were consequently wholly confident that this was a quiet sector. The French sergeant had given the lieutenant his instructions written out by hand in French. They were difficult to read, so he made his dispositions before reading them. He posted half of the men in the trench that ran parallel to the old road, looking hopelessly up the slope of a hill as steep as the one we had just descended and apparently as completely covered with barbed wire as the other had been with fallen trees. The second half, he sent to sleep in the dugout. Then he went out with Straight to examine the position.

On his return he retired to the little office compartment in the dugout and with my help began to decipher the instructions. He had never studied French and my knowledge of the language was only that gained by two years of high-school work, so that our task was not easy. First we had to puzzle out the writing and rewrite the whole thing in a hand which we could read easily. Then I made as much sense as I could out of the familiar words and we both filled in the gaps by laborious guessing, figuring, and reading of signs and labels on trenches and equipment. Finally the orders made fair sense, and he changed his dispositions to comply with them; putting out groups of men in auto-rifle posts well up the forward hill, beyond the crest of which, so said the instructions, lay the Boche front line.

There were no signs of hostile activity during the whole day. True, occasional reports were heard in the distance on either side of us, but we knew that they emanated from our own lines. The sector was too

quiet to satisfy us, when we had so much ammunition waiting to be shot off, and in spite of orders rifles were sometimes discharged in the general direction of the enemy. Straight and I joined the lieutenant in a bit of grenade practice with a few '*citrons*' that we found in the dugout, for none of us had handled live grenades before, and while the supply lasted we made the water in the shell holes execute a fine series of geyser gymnastics.

All moving about was confined to the trenches or the sheltered road, and we carefully avoided assembling in groups so that in case a shell should come over it might not do too much execution. But nothing arrived except our food, brought up by the members of the reserve platoon.

At night we withdrew to the trench on the hill and posted small watches. Many of the sleepers, finding the trench itself too narrow and being reassured by the quiet of the day, went out into the woods behind and slept aboveground.

During my watch I circulated up and down our one hundred and fifty yards of line, stopping to chat with the pairs of sentinels and passing the 'good word' from each to each. Two French soldiers who were on advisory duty with us provided a surprise for me when I first saw them lying on the trench bottom, wrapped in *white* blankets, looking like great slugs, or, to a night imagination, like genuine ghosts. At midnight, when I was talking with Palmer and Gertisser, an explosion occurred in the air about forty yards to my right — an explosion every detail of which was visible, from the core of red flame of almost blinding intensity to the mass of radiating spokes and the hot, darting sparks. The men in the woods woke in panic and tumbled into

U.S. Official Drawing

'THE TREE SHE MOVE'

This picture might have been posed by D' Orta on the night described in the text. The trenches were in exactly this state of dilapidation

the trench, impeding my hurried progress to the spot, where I found D'Orta explaining to the lieutenant.

'The tree, she move. I throwa da bomb. Mebbe it ees a Dutchman.'

'How did you know how it worked?' asked the lieutenant.

'No a know till he tell me jes' now. 'Fraid it might blow me up.'

'Yes. Well, remember that trees don't move.'

'Yes, sir.'

And the men all went back to sleep in the woods.

The next day 'down front,' as we called our position in the valley, was as quiet as the preceding one. In exploring one of the abandoned sections of trenches I discovered the wreckage of a burned dugout, from which I extracted a quantity of Uneeda biscuits in sealed tin boxes. In opening one of these well-made containers I found that the contents, far from being spoiled, had been deliciously toasted by the fire, and, with many of my comrades, I ate toasted crackers at frequent intervals all day. The larger part of the store I moved into our good dugout, to augment the emergency ration of untoasted canned biscuits that had been placed in every dugout to tide over the occupants in case they should be cut off from the rear for any considerable length of time.

At Eulert's post I found a quantity of leaflets, printed in German, rolled tightly in tin tubes so that they could be fired from a rifle grenade *tromblon* into the enemy lines. These canisters resembled exactly, except for the color of the wadding, the flare canisters, which could be fired from the same weapon. The resemblence later caused one of my companions to waste several in a vain attempt to send up a flare at night.

He was in for a jollying when we discovered his mistake.

The area on our left was held by Sergeant Mitchell's platoon and that on his left by Lieutenant Miles's. To their left and our right were French platoons which had remained to assist in our instruction and to make sure that the line should be properly held in case we proved inefficient. The dugouts near the P.C. were occupied by Sergeant Pettingil's platoon which acted as a company reserve and carried water and mess to the platoons in the front line.

At about six o'clock Sunday evening a runner from the P.C. brought the news that we were to exchange places with the French group on our right and an order for two sergeants to accompany the captain on a reconnaissance of the new trenches. In consequence Straight and I went along with the reconnoitering party, making careful note of the positions where automatic rifles should be placed, the proper posts for the men, the location of the gas alarms, the position of the dugouts, and getting a familiarity with the winding of the trenches which we hoped to retain so that we might guide every one to his place in the dark. We accepted everything that was told us except the numbers painted on the dugout door frames to indicate their capacity, and made a less generous count of our own which would at least give every occupant space in which to lie down.

The trench which we had occupied nightly ran, as has been said, northeast and southwest along the crest of a slope. The main line of our new area was a continuation of this, facing due north, just around the angle of the slope, toward the straight second ridge, beyond which lay the Boche line. Our daylight trench in the valley did not extend across our new front, so

that we were to occupy a permanent, rather than a merely temporary, position like the former.

At nine-thirty, when darkness was just beginning to fall, Straight and I met the incoming platoon at the head of the *boyau* and escorted them along the trench to where the French *sous-lieutenant* took the lead and placed the men whom we designated in the positions occupied by his own men. Immediately upon relief, each Frenchman hurried off alone to the dugout where we had spent the day. Our platoon was much larger than the French one, so we overmanned the trench considerably, placing two men on posts where only one had been before, and still permitting half to remain in the dugout to sleep. Corporal Schneider was put in charge of a visiting patrol which was supposed to circulate back and forth through the trench from Corporal Duffy's auto-rifle emplacement, on the extreme right, to Palmer's little shelter, a third of a mile to the left on the other border of our sector, for the purpose of carrying reports from post to post and seeing that no enemy patrols penetrated the lines at intermediate positions. Straight showed the lieutenant over the area and explained all the dispositions to him, while I hustled about on errands of all sorts. Although I had twice shown Schneider his route, he could not recollect the proper turns — apparently lacking any sense of direction — and lost his patrol several times by wandering back into disused *boyaux*. Each time he appealed to me to set him aright, with the result that I was conducting the patrol intermittently until three in the morning. By that time, having been active ever since four the previous morning, I arranged to turn in, and retired to dugout 'B.'

Dugout 'B' was located on a small side trench. To

enter it one turned at right angles from this side trench, went down a flight of about fifteen steps in the wall toward the enemy's lines, so that the door might face away from any shells arriving in the trench, and passed through the outer door frame at the top of which, in place of a door, was rolled a blanket, wet with vermerol, ready to be pulled down in case of gas. Inside this door was a small chamber or passage, terminating in a true wooden door, also covered by a blanket. The inner door and the blankets were left open that the air might enter, but a gas sentinel was posted at the top of the steps to drop the curtain and give the alarm in case of danger. The dugout itself was a room eight feet wide and seventeen long, with the entrances at either end of one side. It was entirely sheathed in wood and heavy timbers and provided with a small stove and chimney to clear the air. An aisle two feet wide was left along the front side, and behind it, raised about eighteen inches from the floor, was a shelf of chicken wire, providing a common bed. Four feet above that, and only far enough from the ceiling to permit a man to sit up, was a wooden shelf, the most popular of the two beds, it seemed, for it was wholly occupied when I entered. Nearly all the men were sleeping soundly with their boots, leggins, and blouses comfortably laid aside.

Small streams of water dropped from the ceiling in places, and white lime stalactites and lumps of rust glistened moistly in the light of the four candle stubs that were serving fourteen men for illumination. Dirt and dust encrusted everything. The floor and bed were strewn with loose rifle cartridges, broken pieces of hard-tack, and opened meat tins. A large pile of French ammunition occupied one corner, and packs, rifles, and

tin hats were hung thickly along the passage wall. A horrible smell of musty dampness and decaying filth pervaded the place.

Knowing that I should be called again in two hours, I merely unhooked my blouse collar as a preparation to retiring, and lay down on my side upon the chicken-wire bed, my head pillowed in my tin hat.

CHAPTER VIII

MORE OF THE REAL THING

SUDDENLY the dugout, deep underground though it was, trembled and shook as a ship might striking a rock; a heavy crust of dirt, from the bunks above, fell in my face, and the rat that had been exploring along the beam close by plumped on his back beside my head, writhed for a moment, squirmed over onto his feet, and darted off screeching. An all-enveloping blanket of heavy, rumbling sound fell about the dugout, and the roar of bursting shells outside merged in one grand clamor that hurled every occupant of the tiny space instantly into stunned wakefulness.

'What is it? What is it?' some one called in a strained, pleading voice, for he, like the rest of us, was too startled to understand. 'An earthquake?'

'No! A barrage! Get dressed! Put 'em on!'

Each man started fumbling with his shoes and leggins, working in hurried helplessness.

I can only tell how I felt, but I believe that my comrades all experienced the same sensations. My whole body trembled convulsively as in a violent chill, my knees shook, my fingers and hands moved purposelessly. I seemed deprived of strength, almost of power to control my limbs, as a man struggling against a monster in a dream. I was afraid — and I admit it shamelessly, as every one of my comrades did — scared 'into jelly.' It was not the fear of any specific injury that I experienced, just an overpowering sense of the terrible unusual, the unknown that might happen. My

voice was, can I say, staring, strained, unnatural — high-pitched and helpless.

I crammed on my helmet and grabbed my rifle, with bayonet fixed, from its nail on the wall. The others finally got themselves together, literally, and sat on the edge of their bunks talking rapidly and aimlessly, without listening to each other, to conceal their fear. The candles were burning low, and as we noticed it we whiffed out all but one to preserve them, for we were suddenly struck by an additional terror of being left in darkness.

Norton, the gas sentinel, with more courage than the rest of us, perhaps because he could see what was going on, remained silent at his post inside the dugout door, until, as he told me later, he saw, in the dim light made by the moon behind thin clouds, a gray haze settling down the steps above him. He stuck his head inside and remarked in an almost matter-of-fact way, 'Gas, boys, gas!' He ducked inside, rolling down the double blankets, and hurried to the other door which he closed likewise. Since the stovepipe was already plugged, this made the dugout supposedly gas-proof, but we were taking no chances with the most dreaded of weapons.

We bounced off our helmets, dove into our masks, which had been close tied under our chins for the last four days, and then fumbled on the floor again for the suddenly discarded headgear. The masks shut us off from everything even more than the terrific sound which still eddied about us, and instinctively seeking contact with each other we drew in around the one candle where it sputtered on the edge of the bunk. I held two fingers together against it to measure the length, and wondered how many more minutes it could

hold out. As it shrank and flickered, we crowded closer together.

Looking out through the steamed eye-pieces of the mask I saw a sight that instantly reminded me of some of the pictures of Captain Nemo and his faithful followers gathered about some treasure chest on the sea bottom. Just at the edge of the little circle of light ranged a row of huge staring eyes in black, pointed faces from the snouts of which a shaking pipe led down into the darkness. The mud-colored helmets hid the men's foreheads. Only their ears, white and large, projected out on either side of the weird mask faces. Conversation was reduced to a mere series of gurgles.

Sergeant Loffman had alone remained lying on the bunk in almost his characteristically undisturbed and somnolent state. Finally out of the recesses of his mask he called, 'Load up your pockets with these shells!'

The crowd attacked the pile of French cartridges and divided them rapidly. The idea was good in that it kept the men busy and hence helped to reduce their fear, but had no other value, for the shells would fit only the auto-rifles of which there was not one in the dugout.

A half-hour went by, and finally, to my infinite relief, I heard Straight's voice outside.

'Ranlett, are you there?' he called.

'Yes.'

'Come on out.'

I pushed aside the blankets and found him at the top of the steps.

'Take your mask off, it's all safe now,' he said. I obeyed.

'Get 'em all out quick! Stand to!' he cried when I was free of the mask.

I jumped down the steps, shouting, 'Take 'em off, boys! It's all right. Come on out!'

'Go on out,' called Loffman in his usual nonchalant tone of voice. A few of the men stepped out warily, and when they found that the racket had greatly diminished tried to persuade the rest to follow. All, however, still wore their masks.

'It's safe!' I called, rushing in. 'I've got mine off.'

When those inside saw me alive without a mask, some of their courage returned and, snatching off their face-pieces, they tumbled out, but balked at ascending the steps, for the shells were still bursting, though not in full chorus.

Lieutenant Bishop, his mask dangling from its satchel and his face pale but covered with sweat, was suddenly seen standing on the trench parados, a smoking automatic in his hand.

The sight brought courage with the thought, 'If he can get away with it up there, I'm safe enough here,' and each man hurried confidently to his post in the trenches. Thus by an exhibition of thoughtless, and what some would call foolhardy, courage, the lieutenant instantly transformed us all from scared creatures into fighting men. It was a lesson in leadership which I shall not forget, and for which he deserves much credit, though he maintained later that his only purpose in exposing himself was to see whether the Boches were coming, and that he had fired his automatic merely to make sure it would work.

'Come out to Duffy's with me,' shouted Straight. 'I've been everywhere else. Zitto was hit. Plane flew along the trench and bullet came through the shelter

roof. Got him in the back. He's patched up now and down at the station.'

I hurried along behind him. In a depression we smelled a strong breath of gas and plunged into our masks again. Almost trotting through the dark trench in the steamed mask was like running in a dream. Straight had been on the move ever since the barrage started while I had been safe in the dugout, and now he was nearly overcome by exhaustion, the heat of his mask, and its pressure on his temples. He sat down on the fire step while I bathed his face around the edge of his mask with water from my canteen, until he could proceed. At last we reached Duffy's post which had been beyond the concentration of fire and found his crew, scared like the rest of us, but very thankful to know that the platoon was not wiped out leaving them alone in their isolated position.

Gradually the noise died down, and at last, an hour after it had begun, was suddenly cut off like the din of a shop at the closing gong. The Boches did not come over against us.

At six o'clock a horribly pale Frenchman, spitting green slime, almost speechless, and gasping frantically for every breath, struggled into our trench looking for the dugout where his sergeant had stayed with our lieutenant for the first night. He brought the news that the dugout we had given up that evening had been directly hit by a big shell, that his *sous-lieutenant* had been killed, and that all the platoon were casualties by gas or by the collapse of their shelter. The sergeant, assuring us that the barrage, of many caliber shells and all types of projector and shell gas, had been worse than any concentration of fire he had seen even at Verdun, hurried off to his mates, apparently little excited

at their reported fate, though we could not help remarking on our good fortune in having changed dug-outs.

By eight o'clock the two men from our platoon who had been gassed were carried to the dressing-station and a new schedule of watches was put into effect, with the resumption of the old quiet of trench life. At eight-thirty sad news came from the rear. The company kitchen had been struck by the first shell of the barrage, which had gone clean through the roof of the *abri*, ruining the stove and destroying all the provisions. The reserve platoon had suffered several gas casualties; one of the cooks was gassed to death through a failure to get the elastics of his mask untangled from the mouthpiece and several others were so badly affected that they died later. Lieutenant Miles's platoon, in the exposed trench of our former night position, suffered about twenty-five casualties by gas and fragments of H.E. (high explosive), several men being killed outright; and Sergeant Mitchell's platoon fared only a little better. It had been a severe first time under fire.

We later learned that the barrage had fallen for an hour upon the whole front of the Seventy-Seventh Division, which served to conceal the true purpose of the Boches. One of the front-line platoons of 'A' Company, about a half-mile to our left, directly in front of Badonviller, was surrounded by a box barrage which cut it off from the rear. A line of skirmishers advanced on its front, drawing the fire of the terrified men, so that a platoon column of enemy crept in on either flank unobserved and attacked with terrible success, making several prisoners, killing many, and breaking up the whole platoon.

But none of these happenings touched us so much at

the time — such was our already well-developed military callousness — as the fact that we should have no hot breakfast. The emergency ration proved its worth, everybody drawing a half-box of biscuits from the supply, so that life was made tolerable, but we missed our hot coffee and beans.

During the morning three more members of the platoon complained of gassing and were taken to the first-aid station. Just as the last of these men was removed, Corporal Nolan, always a nervous and depressed man, who had been becoming more and more silent and white-faced ever since the terrible night ordeal in the exposed trench, when the cold fingers of fear had clutched at all, seemed suddenly changed. He leaped up from his post and began running about the trench, tapping his companions as if in a game of tag. His eyes strained forward curiously in their sockets, his fingers twitched rapidly, and he jabbered incoherently. Loffman, who was near, grappled with him, and others came to his assistance to restrain the madman, overcome by shell shock and fear. We laid him upon a stretcher and held him down, while Lieutenant Bishop tried to quiet him.

'Don't you recognize me, Tom? Tom! — answer!'

Tom writhed on, frothing at the mouth.

'Be quiet, Tom! Keep still.'

It was like a person soothing a crying child. Gradually Nolan became still and could be carried away.

I obtained an empty stretcher and putting it on the parapet where I should be undisturbed and could have plenty of fresh air, made up my two days' sleep in two hours.

That afternoon we made elaborate preparations in apprehension of an attack during the coming night,

distributing much ammunition from the ammunition dugout and laying all the auto-rifles carefully. A new kitchen was installed at the P.C., and by supper the succession of luxurious meals was resumed. At one noon meal we had baked kidney beans, steak, boiled potatoes, coffee, cabbage, hot cakes, bread, rice pudding, and corn syrup. Our rationing in the trenches was more hearty, varied, and wholly satisfying than it had been at any time since we left Camp Upton, and was in every way a success. Sweets were supplied us in abundance in the form of syrup. Gallon cans of the pleasant syrup stood in every dugout, for we had more than we could use at any one meal. Candles, which were ordinarily issued with the ration, were, however, scarce when they were most needed, and matches were counted more carefully than franc pieces, so that we had to get on with a minimum of light.

Near the lieutenant's small dugout, equidistant from the ammunition dugout fifty feet away on the right and dugout 'B' fifty feet on the left, was a small table with a bench on either side, set in an excavated room the depth of the trench, and roofed over with a single thickness of elephant iron and six inches of dirt. The ration details always brought the food containers to this point, where Straight and I served it. Since it was desirable that only a few men should assemble at any one place, to avoid attracting the attention of the enemy planes, the men would come in two at a time, one from the right and one from the left area of the trench. After their mess-kits had been filled and they had returned to their posts to eat, they would pass on the word to the men on their flank who would come in in turn. This was the system, but it did not work with complete smoothness, and often the congestion about

the shelters became heavy, only to be lightened when the food was all gone or the meal-time counter-battery work began and the long river of wabbling, wailing shells began to pour back and forth over our heads, leaving us startled but unmolested.

Though food was abundant, water, which had to be carried just like food, was comparatively scarce. One was fortunate if he got a canteen full a day for all purposes: drinking, washing, and cleaning his mess-kit. The kits were more often scoured with mud and wiped with paper than washed, and each man's small dish-towel became even more grease-encrusted than usual. There was hardly any water for toilet purposes; I shaved once during the week, using as a shaving-mug my canteen cup from which I ordinarily drank my coffee or ate my rice pudding, and washing my face and hands from the same cup full. Many of the men used coffee for shaving, both because it was hot and because it was more abundant than plain water. The order which made clear that a cake of issue soap was all that was necessary to keep one's uniform free from spots 'under all conditions' could not have contemplated such a scarcity.

On Tuesday we continued our preparations for a warm reception. My training in map-sketching served me in good stead, for I was able to make a map of the sector to aid us in laying the lines of fire, and to serve as a guide to the platoon which should relieve us. The machine-gun company moved a gun into our position, and a night patrol was sent out to examine the area in front of us.

Wednesday night at eleven, when my turn to sleep was up, I scrambled from the bench in the mess shelter where I slept on my back on the single board, wedged

in between the wall and the legs of the table, and began my rounds in the trenches. Way out in the long, unguarded section of line between Eulert's and Duffy's posts I saw the nodding line of helmets of the French visiting patrol coming toward me in the half-moonlight. Since safety demanded that we halt all persons passing through the trench, whether we thought we knew them or not, I halted and raised the loaded automatic which I was carrying in my hand, in welcome. The leading sergeant stopped at my tensely whispered 'Halt!'

'Give the countersign.'

'*Comment?*'

'The password.'

'*Pas comprend.*'

I was getting worried, and could not think of what to say next. Hah! I made a wild guess.

'*Le mot de passe.*'

'*Ah! Oui!* —' he burst out delightedly, but stopped, for he had been drinking and was not wholly steady. He did not know the password.

This was bad. Perhaps I had really stopped a German patrol. What should I do? There was my automatic, but I was alone and a dark line of figures stretched away around the traverse beyond the sergeant, who was now fumbling in his coat with one hand and with the other scratching his head under the edge of his tilted helmet as if to stimulate thought.

I waited. At last he found the object of his search — a piece of paper with the list of the daily passwords for the week. He picked out the right one and gave it to me — '*Châlons!*' What a relief!

Lieutenant Bishop had had less sleep than any of the rest of us, but on Thursday morning at one o'clock he finally turned in for a good long rest, arranging with

the sergeants to be in command while he slept. At five o'clock Saul, a runner, came from the P.C.

'The captain wants the lieutenant to take breakfast with him at six o'clock.'

At five-thirty, Straight went in and shook Bishop without waking him. He came out silently with the expression of a man leaving a sick-room.

'It is a shame to wake him. He needs the sleep,' he whispered. 'I hadn't the heart to do it. Let's try again.'

We both entered the dugout. I felt almost paternal when I saw our tired 'boss' sleeping so soundly, his rosy face paled and relaxed. He looked so young all of a sudden! He had never seemed that way before, but now all his upright bearing and his tone of command were gone; he was just a fellow, a little older than myself, but younger than most of his command, a fellow who needed sleep and needed it more than any of us. And we had to wake him!

Friday evening, a week after we had entered the line, came the word that we were to go into reserve. Saul, who had been through the *boyau* to the P.C. many times, was to guide us out after dark. At ten o'clock the first members of the relief arrived, under Sergeant Kimball, and I set out with a party for the rear. Saul became confused in the dark at the first trench crossing and gave up helplessly.

'Let me take it,' I said, forcing my way to the head of the column. I had not been down that particular trench, but, having mapped our platoon sector and having seen the other end of the *boyau* at the P.C., thought I could lead the crowd out.

As I proceeded clamors of protest arose behind:

'You'll get us into the Boche lines! — We've gone

twice the distance already! — Stop and wait. — Go ahead yourself and find out whether you are right!'

I did not heed them, and in ten minutes, though it seemed an hour, we came out at the P.C. dugout and were assigned to an *abri* in the roadside, where we lit our candles and began reading the inscriptions left by the Iowa troops of the Forty-Second Division.

The relief was completed at eleven o'clock and we had just settled down with a gas sentinel near the big bell, for what we hoped might be our first good sleep in a week, when the inevitable happened. Hooper, the first sergeant, appeared at the door. 'Hi, Ranlett, pick out a detail to carry coffee.' I had the usual unpleasant job of trying to decide who had done the least work lately and would consequently be in line for assignment to the detail. Jolly little Corporal Lorier and five men 'drew the unlucky numbers' and went out on a hard round.

During the next day some of the men were carrying food virtually all the time, and the rest either lay in the grass sleeping, wrote letters, washed clothes, or merely sat and talked. At night I was ordered to walk through the trenches with a visiting patrol to keep in touch with all parts of the company. In the half-moonlight, which cast erratic shadows everywhere, I entered our old night position on the hill slope and was startled at the terrible change which had taken place in it, and for the first time realized the full power of the greatest concentration of the barrage. The once fairly regular and orderly ditch was now nothing but a series of huge pits of pulverized earth; parapet, parados, and fire step had all disappeared. Way 'down front' in the valley was an isolated outpost which we sought for vainly, fearing that during our

search we should be shot by our own men who were occupying it. A pile of gray-painted trench mortar shells, looking huge in the moonlight, with their vicious wings and bald noses pointing in all directions, suggested what might have happened if just one shell of the barrage had struck them. The dugout, close by, would have disappeared utterly.

On Saturday night, June 29th, ten days after we had entered the front-line position, the company was relieved. At eleven o'clock, in the utter blackness of an overcast night, we took the road in section columns of twos with single connecting files at twenty-five-yard intervals between them. I was marching alone in this capacity, the rattle and bang of my equipment being the only sound that broke the stillness, when the low hum of a distant Boche plane struck my ears. It grew louder and louder, evidently approaching, but the plane was entirely invisible in the gloom. Suddenly a long stream of sparkling fire shot out of the night ahead and curved crackling to earth in short bursts. Fritz was peppering the road with tracer bullets. We dove for the grass ditch at the side, now that we knew where he was, for a mass of men on the white surface of the road would show clearly from above, while against the dark hue of the grass they would be hidden. Ahead of us and approaching swiftly darted the fearful stream of fire accompanied by the pulsing roar of the motor, but in an instant, directly over our heads, the thunder of another plane burst out and the hanging wheels of the night terror that had stolen up on us with motor shut off, under the diversion created by his comrade, appeared barely skirting the tree-tops.

He opened fire with a rush, the whizzing, flaming bullets spattering the hard surface of the road and dis-

lodging bits of stone in the wreckage of the house against which I was crouching. On he swept — and as the stream of fire disappeared in the dark again, no one stirred.

Five minutes passed, but the planes did not return. I breathed again.

'Hi! Did he get you?' called Duffy, running up from behind.

'No. They went into the rocks there.'

'Gee! He fired at you!'

'No!'

'He did. I saw it.'

'Well, I was here. I ought to know.'

'Lucky kid. Too close for me. He didn't miss any of us by much. Some stunt. Nice fellow.'

CHAPTER IX

BACK TO THE WOODS

s—s—s!
i
h
W

Schumpf! Bang! — followed by a shower of tiny fragments.

SHELLS all arrive that way, with a long preliminary shriek that rises and rises yearningly, as if climbing for a height that it can never reach, and in the attempt is suddenly cut off to end in a swift whistle of collapse, succeeded instantly by the crash of the explosion.

This shell did all these things, and more, for the last three hundred yards of its flight were in a slow, descending curve through the branches of the forest roof over our heads, and were made curiously visible by a wake of dropping branches and fluttering leaves. The patter of the bits of shell after the explosion was like that of the first big hailstones that follow the thunder crash, and the second shower of white-bellied leaves that accompanied them, like the flutter of petals from a blossoming fruit tree.

The woods were filled with silence. We lay flat and motionless, our anxious ears searching for the dull boom and distant wail that would mark the setting forth of another shell. Instead, we heard the clatter of an airplane motor, breaking out, with a sudden shift in the wind, close above our heads.

'Keep still! Don't let him see us through the trees!'

No such suggestion was necessary. We kept still and

watched the shadow of the immense wings passing above the sunlit shelter of leaves. The sound grew fainter and he was gone.

'Whew!' said some one. 'Jerry's got the ol' eye on us, bo! Whoever fired that doo-whanger at him's a poor shot. Must 'a' thought the woods were empty.'

My long-lived curiosity as to what becomes of shells fired at aircraft was wholly satisfied. They come down. Fortunately most of them explode two miles in air and descend in fragments, not being fired on a flat trajectory as this one had been.

Our removal from the front to the reserve line having thus been made additionally eventful, we continued to pitch camp as we had been doing when the shell arrived. A wrecked stable provided the material for a ten-minute house, in whose erection four of us were interested. Tar-paper from the fallen roof made our floor, three old doors and a box-end laid sideways composed our walls, and four shelter halves strung across a rope suspended between two trees completed the roof.

'All done. We'll even have running water — when it rains,' Gertisser remarked, and we crawled in — at five-thirty in the morning — for our 'night's' sleep. A little way off to our right the other members of the platoon were already asleep in their unimproved shelter tents.

Barely had we pulled in our feet when some one brought an order for the platoon to move a quarter of a mile or so, to be nearer the kitchen. The reason was good, but the words were sad. Down came the house, never to be rebuilt, for we were 'fed up' with house-building for that day, and, like the other two hundred angry and sleepy men near us, we bundled

all our goods into our shelter halves which we carried like sacks to the new location.

When I awoke at noon the woods about me presented an odd picture. The squat little tents were scattered everywhere in the most unmilitary disorder, like umbrellas on a sunny beach, and parties of men were lolling all about. Some one had persuaded the barber to unroll his precious kit of scissors and razors, and a line of customers was seated among the leaves, waiting their turn to mount the barrel which served as a chair. 'Next' was stirring the fire, so that the water for his shave might be hot, and the man on the chair was smiling contentedly as the clippers cut their deep, white furrow from the back of his neck to his forehead.

We were now, as I have said, in a reserve-line position, although without considerable examination the place was hardly recognizable as a position at all. As I discovered the next day, when I was detailed to make a map of the area, our sector consisted of about a half-mile of line running through the dense woods, and chiefly marked out by wide bands of intricate wire. Behind the wire, trenches were outlined in the ground — that is, they were dug to the depth of about six inches — and dugouts were prepared or in the course of construction. A small barracks building served as orderly-room, kitchen shelter, and officers' quarters. The reserve line was about three miles behind the front, from which we had just been relieved, and two miles behind the second line. The third battalion, of which 'B' Company was a part, had 'been up' for ten days with three companies in the front line, and one in battalion reserve in an intermediate position near Badonviller. Now it was withdrawn to the regimental

reserve and the battalion of the 308th, which had been in the second line, was advanced to the front, while the other battalion, that had occupied the reserve, went in to the second line.

In theory we should have occupied regular ten-day periods in each position, but in practice our movements were apparently erratic. Ten days at the front were followed by two in regimental reserve, and then by a night move to a position still farther in the rear when the whole regiment was drawn out into divisional reserve.

The move was made, as usual, at night. We progressed for a long distance in single file through dense woods, following a much-worn and rock-strewn path, and, since we were not at the head of the column, were obliged to run most of the time to keep from losing contact with the invisible head, which, however slowly it marched, seemed always to outstride us. At one halt, after fifty minutes of this spasmodic running, I plumped down wearily on the road bank and laid aside my rifle. When I resumed march, so tired and forgetful was I, and so accustomed had I become in the weeks past to moving about in the trenches carrying only an automatic instead of a rifle, that I forgot my Enfield and left it lying on the ground.

Some minutes later I noticed that there was one less thing than usual weighing down my shoulders and began hurriedly to pat my clothing, as a detective 'frisks' a criminal for a gun. The crime I had committed came to me with a sickening shudder. I, a sergeant, who should set a good example to all his mates, had blundered seriously, and that without the slightest pretense of an excuse. I might be 'broken' for the offense; even if I were not, I should be deserv-

edly looked upon with the greatest scorn and derision. Lose a rifle! Why, it would have been much less blameworthy to have lost my life.

I was bringing up the rear of the column, as luck would have it, and when I stopped, the column instantly moved out of my sight beyond the solid wall of darkness. My avenue of deliverance was plain. I ran back to the place where we had halted and recovered the now precious piece. Then my real task to overtake the platoon began. No one who has not run, as I did, for fifteen minutes or more, with full pack, overcoat, raincoat, extra shoes, two hundred rounds of ammunition, and several grenades, can appreciate the ludicrousness of the popular idea that soldiers go into battle at top speed with all their impedimenta. They would not go far if they started at any speed thus encumbered. I *had* to catch up with that column soon, or they might take a side turn where I should lose them and become an A.W.O.L. (man absent without leave) as well as the loser of a rifle, all in one night. I dragged breathlessly on. At last — oh, inconceivable relief — I heard the babble of voices. It was my platoon again. And no one ever knew that I had been away!

One o'clock in the morning found us arriving at one of the camps which we had passed two weeks before, on the night of our march to Ker Avor. Every man scrambled for bunk-room on the wooden sleeping-shelves of the barracks. Straight and I secured space for the three sergeants at one end of the lower row. Loffman had disappeared, but not for long; in he staggered with a bed-sack full of hay.

'Swiped it from the Froggies,' he whispered to me. 'Get one yourself. Just the next shack.' We were not long in following his example. Seven unoccupied bed-

sacks — cooties and all — disappeared from the neighboring bunk-house while the French occupants slept on undisturbed.

Indian Village, as the camp *Village Indien* was popularly called, was a collection of about forty standard model Adrian huts with oilcloth windows and tar-paper roofs, scattered apparently at random through the oak woods on the high ground to the south of Neufmaisons. It had all the necessary features of a military village — wash-troughs, stables, cook-houses, and shower baths. In one of the wagon-sheds were our precious squad rolls, piled mountain high; in another, large quantities of new equipment which was soon issued to us. Unlike most of the woodland camps in the vicinity, this one was not concealed from above. A little observation from the hill to the east showed that. The trees that should have sheltered it were all dead, and a telltale brown spot proclaimed the location as plainly as a beacon fire. Nevertheless there were no shell holes near the camp to indicate that it had ever been molested, so we rested there without worrying.

Our life at Indian Village was, on the whole, a sinecure. The first day was devoted entirely to sleeping, eating, and cleaning up, and the second to the issue of clothing and equipment. Overseas caps now replaced the little-used felt hats which were sent away to be made into hospital slippers; new socks galore were given out in exchange for worn ones; new articles of clothing replaced all those that had been worn out or — until it was discovered — that had been destroyed by the owners who hoped by the ruse, to be able to claim new ones for merely old. Tremendously heavy trench shoes, of British model, with steel toe caps,

put in their appearance again. One of the men drew a pair of eleven and a half double E's which, since it was the largest size issued, attracted my attention. I found that the pair weighed seven and one half pounds. No wonder the extra pair of 'hob-nails,' which every one carried on his pack and used for a receptacle of all kinds of little odds and ends that he might otherwise have lost, were the source of many bitter complaints.

The Fourth of July was a holiday, except for a half-hour of setting-up drill in the morning. The days following were occupied by practice twice a day on the rifle range or at the 'grenade pond,' both of which were novel affairs; the rifle range consisting of the dry bed of a wide, once-marshy brook, in which one fired from bank to bank against handmade paper targets, and the 'grenade pond,' of a muddy hole full of water into which live grenades were thrown from the shelter of a reënforced trench on the top of a steep bank above it. Here rivalry was stimulated by the designation of floating boxes as targets and the offer of numerous five-franc prizes, by Lieutenant Miles, to the first man to make a hit.

Neufmaisons, barely a quarter of a mile from camp, was the chief 'stamping ground' of the men when off duty, for there were the 'Y,' the cafés, and a few stores, with the usual stock of hazelnuts, canned sardines, lighter tape, silk-embroidered handkerchiefs, and lead-bladed pocket-knives. The 'Y,' which was abundantly stocked with 'good eats' and writing paper, occupied a two-storied stable on the main street, and was always the center of much activity.

On the eve of the holiday the sergeants of the fourth platoon were hosts at a platoon jubilee, or party, of the local talent sort, in which Corporal Lorier played his

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NEUFMAISONS

The 'Y' was in the building on the right

mandolin, Straight and Schneider told dialect stories, some sang solos, some cracked jokes, and all joined in the popular songs; especially 'Homeward Bound,' in which, to imitate Barney Lakritz, we all rendered one line, 'And when the piece of dove flies over the land,' instead of in its proper form, 'And when the dove of peace flies over the land.'

Andy D'Orta, assisted by Jimmy Pistoria and a few other Italian friends, and accompanied on the 'umpty-ump' — an improvised musical instrument consisting of a series of nails, each carrying about ten loose squares of tin, mounted on a ribbed stick which, when another stick was rubbed across the corrugations, produced a noise like an exaggerated tambourine — rendered 'Oh! Marie' and a few other lively Italian songs. As a concluding feature of the programme the French Jew, from one of the Allied outfits in camp with us, whose knowledge of Yiddish delighted many of my platoon-mates and enabled them to converse with him as would otherwise have been impossible, secured one of his comrades to sing us 'Madelon.' At dark, which was not until ten o'clock, we adjourned to the barracks for the collation of chocolate, almonds, and macaroons, which Straight, Loffman, and I had bought at the 'Y.' The platoon, led by Bill Palmer, acclaimed the affair a success.

The Boches entered into the spirit of the celebration, it appeared, for at two in the morning we were awakened by the sound of a barrage falling along the front and the slithering, circular whistle of gas shells entering Neufmaisons. In my hurry to dress so that I might seek shelter should it become necessary, I accomplished the impossible, rolling my spiral puttees in the pitch darkness more neatly than I was able to

do again, even by daylight. The job was so good that I hadn't the heart to take the leggins off again when the racket stopped and we were able to go back to sleep.

At Neufmaisons a reception to some French general, followed by a band concert, occupied the holiday morning. A ball game with large crowds of spectators, in an entirely unprotected field, was the afternoon feature, and a 'stunt night' at the 'Y' composed the evening programme. One of the burlesque acts, in which local regimental actors appeared in civilian costume provided by the 'Y,' caused an unexpected stir of interest in the audience, many members of which exclaimed at how good it looked to see 'real civvies' worn by 'real Americans' again. Impassioned recitations of 'Gunga Din' and 'Gran'pa, ring for liberty,' completed the entertainment.

Straight and I spent much of our spare time walking together, strengthening and ripening the friendship which had been gradually growing during our association. As we walked he told me of his life at college, of his hopes for the future, his interests as a high-school principal, of the sacrifices which his family was making in the war. He could express the ideals and aspirations, at whose utterance many of us grow confused and incoherent, simply, naturally, and beautifully. He could preach a sermon in a conversation; he could inspire his friends to greater ambition and to larger effort. He was a friend to receive confidences or to make them, to give advice which one would not hesitate to follow, to enter properly into the spirit of every occasion or the mood of every scene.

One evening, as we sat in a little orchard above the

village, watching the red glow of the setting sun diffuse over the spire and clustered roofs of the village, and listening to the faint noises of the summer evening, he began to repeat quietly the words of the 'Deserted Village,'

> Sweet was the sound, when oft at evening's close
> Up yonder hill the village murmur rose.

As we continued with our walk he went on to recite the whole poem, which had never particularly impressed me before, but which now is inseparably connected with him in my mind. As I write I still see the calm pictures and portraits of the poem; the preacher, so passing rich with forty pounds a year, the busy whisper circling round to bear the tidings when the master frowned, and all the rest, and I like to think that it might be said of my friend, in the words of the poem which he taught me to enjoy,

> A man was he to all the country dear.

At least he was dear to all who knew him.

And so we went about enjoying the summer sunlight, the beauty of the woods, and the novelty of the activities around us. On Sunday, lacking quite the courage to admit to each other that we wanted to remain to the simple religious service at the 'Y,' we separated, I excusing myself to do an errand at the store, he saying that he would go to the writing-room in the loft. My errand was only a 'frame up,' and, as soon as the sounds of the good old hymns began to be heard, I was back on the bench in the auditorium where I found my friend waiting for me with a grin. 'I couldn't stay away,' he said. We had experienced the same sensations.

One afternoon we wandered up the long slope of the hill behind our camp and found a divisional 'O. Pip' (O.P. or observation post) in spite of its clever concealment. Three tall pines grew close together in an equilateral triangle. They were joined at various heights by platforms, reached by railed, rustic stairs, and, perfectly hidden in the foliage near their summits, was a little cabin. No signs forbade us to climb the stairs or informed us as to the purpose of the cabin, so of course we went up to find out. As we stuck our heads through the trapdoor we startled the two French sergeants on duty, but they recovered quickly and invited us in. We established friendly relations by the exchange of chewing gum and nuts and they proceeded to explain the equipment to us very thoroughly. The post, which was connected to the military telephone system of the region, commanded a large sweep of country and a long but distant section of the line.

To the east, the evergreen forest stretched away invitingly, its waving surface broken here and there by queer, craggy excrescences called *roches* which, since they were just about at the limit of vision, all appeared to be crowned with turreted castles clinging on like the strongholds of the robber barons and black knights of fairy-story times. To the south and west nothing broke the undulations of the tree-tops except the brown spot of dead foliage that marked the site of our camp. To the north, from where the woods ended not far below us, a long field of oats, crossed by many wide bands of barbed wire, stretched down to the village. The camouflage, set up like a huge fence along the side of the main military road, to conceal it from the enemy, appeared a long band of brown, making the thoroughfare more conspicuous than ever. The ruined tower of

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'THE CAMOUFLAGE, SET UP LIKE A HUGE FENCE ALONG THE SIDE OF THE MAIN MILITARY ROAD'

One of the roads that we saw from the observation tower

the church at Badonviller was the only thing that marked the lines at all. A panoramic sketch, on which points of interest and importance were named, was fastened to the wall of the cabin just below the double telescope through which the sergeants showed us villages behind the Boche lines. They pointed out also a chart on which they had traced the course of a hostile airplane that had just passed and the location of the batteries that had fired on it.

The pleasant week of rest was soon over, and another different but equally pleasant one began on Monday evening, July 8th, when, under cover of darkness, we moved up into the second line near Pexonne.

CHAPTER X

GOLD BARS

Our position near Pexonne was, like the regimental reserve area in the woods which we had occupied two weeks before, entirely different from the trench sector as it is commonly conceived. The company headquarters, which here consisted only of the shelter tents of the officers and the kitchen, was located in a beech and hemlock grove, beautifully floored with dry, packed leaves. Half of the company pitched its tents about this nucleus and went back daily to Neufmaisons to work on the rifle range and at the 'grenade pond,' and the other half was scattered at auto-rifle posts in the valley or on the slopes a quarter of a mile below. An outlined trench, half a mile long, on the nearer slope, marked one of the lines, which was held in reality by twenty men; and a deep, heavily traversed trench, provided with two dugouts, formed the front of the positions near the barbed wire. One of the roads from Pexonne, which lay half a mile in front of the position, to Neufmaisons, a mile and a half to the rear, passed directly through the wire, which here, as was frequently necessary in a countryside so widely covered with bands of wire, was left open. Beside the opening were great wooden horses, wound with wire, which could be rolled into place to close the apertures.

We entered the most advanced of these two lines at night, with the result that we could not appreciate how informal and how far from the front they were, and observed all the elaborate precautions which we had learned to employ during our first time up. At

one point we all walked carefully along a narrow board, laid apparently to keep our feet out of a particularly muddy hole.

When morning came we found that the hole was twelve feet deep on either side of the board which was one roof timber of an unfinished dugout. We found, too, that there was a house just ahead of us, but we were wary about leaving the trench to examine it. As the day wore on, and we began to appreciate that we were far from the real front, we became bolder, and those who were off duty jumped out of the trench and went to explore the house. It proved to be one of those in which the stable and the family rooms were all built together under one roof. The interior was barren of furniture and the windows were gone; the walls were decorated with crude charcoal drawings of all degrees of vulgarity and obscenity, or covered with the names and addresses of former occupants, and the peak of the roof was crowned by a pole used as an artillery sighting-point.

All of us men whose duty positions in the trench were conveniently close by moved our packs and equipment into the upstairs rooms where we might sleep. We lived the proverbial 'life of Riley.' Duty consisted solely of sitting in the trench for a few hours a day, but never long enough to give one the impression that he was doing any work. To pass away the time some of the platoon began to prepare for a feast. One 'found' two chickens at a farm which he reported as abandoned; another visited the 'Y' at Pexonne — between the first and second lines — to buy condensed milk; a third got some bread and eggs from some civilians; and a fourth persuaded the company cook to lend him a pail, butter, and flour. The chickens were plucked and

boiled in an abandoned biscuit tin over a grate fire which smoked fearfully and filled the kitchen with cough-producing blue clouds. A griddle was prepared by the hammering-out of a piece of corrugated iron from the dugout roof, and a griddle fork was made from a piece of tin can, shaped by some corporal's wire-cutters and fastened to a stick. The griddle was greased with candle wax — butter being very scarce — and the batter for the flapjacks was mixed in the pail. Straight officiated at the griddle, and in short order the big brown cakes began to come off into the waiting mess-kits. As the party progressed, the members became enthusiastic and burst into incoherent song, beating time with spoons, and applauding as each new flapjack was done. Just when the exuberance was at its height and every one was bellowing out the wordless tune of the Doxology, their eyes streaming with tears occasioned by the smoke and their faces covered with sweat, two colonels, unattended and unannounced, appeared at the door!

Strangely enough, no official objection ever reached our ears.

After several days of 'life at the country house,' the fourth platoon was withdrawn to the woods and set to work at the rifle range and 'grenade pond.'

We got back from the 'grenade pond' at four o'clock Saturday. I made a trip to the spring at the foot of the hill near the innocent-looking barn that was filled with thousands and thousands of shells, and obtained a pail of water which I brought back to camp. I retired to a private spot behind a clump of trees and began to bathe. Just as I was 'soaped up' — the fatefully proper moment for an interruption — Cadeaux appeared.

U.S. Official Drawing

THE CAMOUFLAGED ENTRANCE TO A DUGOUT AT NEUFMAISONS

This was the sort of camouflage used on the battery across the road from the 'country house'

'The lieutenant wants to see you! He's over at your tent.'

'Can't come, you see. Tell him how it is.'

'I did. He says to go to his tent when you're through.'

I did not hurry about dressing. It probably was not important, but if it wasn't, why had he come to my tent instead of sending a runner for me?

Upon my return to the platoon every one urged me to hurry to see the lieutenant.

'What's up?' I inquired.

'Go on down. Straight's gone. Better make speed.'

I was puzzled at the air of mystery, but could not guess the cause.

Lieutenant Bishop rose smiling to meet me. It seemed unnecessary. He saluted and held out his hand. I did the same, not knowing what to make of it.

'Congratulations, Ranlett,' he said.

I began to see the light.

'We're commissioned,' put in Straight, who was standing beside him.

It had been a long time since I had remembered the Officers' Training School in far-away Camp Upton, and the fact that I had ever aspired to the gold bars. In the continual activity of the present I had had no time to think of what might happen or what had happened, but only of what was happening. I felt useful where I was, and seemed firmly attached to the platoon family. The news, meaning, as it did, that I should be transferred elsewhere, was a momentary blow. Moreover, I had seen the responsibility which a lieutenant had to bear and all the difficulties of his task. The more I thought about what was in store for me, the smaller and younger I felt. I did not have to accept

the commission. I might stay in the pleasant rut where I was. But no, I would not be a coward and neglect my opportunity simply because it was late in the day, and I was tired and afraid. I should feel differently in the morning. I would stick it out.

We five 'B' Company sergeants who had received news of our appointments walked to Ker Avor that evening with the three company officers, to officially accept our commissions and be sworn in. The act was simple. It made no change in the appearance of any but Pettingil, who produced two long-treasured gold bars from his pocket-book, yet ten minutes later the colonel was shaking hands with us and offering us lemonade — the colonel who but a few hours before had seemed immeasurably far above us.

On the way back to camp we talked with the officers on terms of new-found equality. I had become so thoroughly army-ized that it took me some time to set aside the idea that officers belonged to a superior race and realize, again, that we were all human beings together. My training in the ranks had been more valuable than any amount of additional work at an Officers' Training School could have been, for it gave me a perfect comprehension of the enlisted man's point of view. I hope that I was a more sympathetic and a better officer because of it.

In the platoon Straight and I tried to conceal the reason for our departure, which was to take place on Monday. I, at least, felt much embarrassed by the fear that my comrades would attempt to treat me as an officer. I wanted to keep on being my old self as long as I stayed with the outfit.

The next morning, Sunday, I awoke to find Straight writhing in agony on the ground outside our tent. He

was suffering from the effects of a very severe case of hives. I rode on the ambulance with him to Pexonne, where we had to remain until dark awaiting evacuation to a hospital, and then walked back to the company to make up his pack and to try to get him what he begged for more earnestly than anything else — a clean suit of underclothes.

As I was passing the 'country house' — our former position — I heard a shell coming, the first one in a week. It seemed to be driving right for me, and I dived into the gutter. The shell, however, fell elsewhere, so far away toward the front that I could not see its explosion. Five others followed, at minute intervals, while I waited for the celebration to cease.

When D'Orta, carrying Straight's pack, and I, with the desired suit of underclothes, his overcoat, raincoat, and rifle, returned to Pexonne, we saw where one of the shells — the first — had fallen. It had come through the roof of a house near the 'Y' and gone out the side wall, not exploding until it struck the paved street, which was now spattered with blood. People toid us that the division surgeon had been sitting on his horse at this spot, talking with three other officers, and that the shell had fallen among the group, taking them wholly unawares. Some German gun had mechanically fired its given rounds at the town, not knowing or caring what would be the result, but purposeless as the act was, it had had fearful effect. When I entered the dressing-station — an electrically illuminated dugout, fitted with operating-room, dressing-room, and several ward-rooms — I saw the unfortunate doctor's high riding-boot, torn into reddened shreds, and his new saddle-bags soaked with his blood. The poor man himself, his face more pale than his

white hair, lay with clenched fists breathing the heavy gasps of struggling unconsciousness. The war was not all sunshine, not all the 'life of Riley' even in a 'quiet sector,' and the Baccarat sector was quiet, as sectors went.

D'Orta and I said 'good-bye' to Straight with all the hand-clasps and vain attempts to utter our real feelings which mark the partings of true friends. When, at last, we found ourselves outside, away from the depressing atmosphere of the dressing-station, we walked for some distance in silence. D'Orta broke it first. 'Fine man,' he said, almost with a sob, for he knew he might not see Straight again, and I, feeling likewise that the farewell was to be a long one, could not answer. My slow nod was enough.

But scenes changed quickly. The next evening I found him again in this manner.

The five new second 'looies,' in the disguise of sergeants, carrying their full marching equipment, pulled out of Company 'B's' woods at six o'clock on Monday morning, after exchanging farewell handshakes and mock salutes with all of their 'old gang' who were awake. They went to Indian Village, where they found the other new officers from the battalion assembled to turn in their equipment. They gave up their rifles, packs, trench knives, pistols, blankets, overcoats, and raincoats, retaining only the clothes they wore, their extra shirts, their steel helmets, and their gas masks and toilet articles. They rolled up their few personal belongings in their extra shirts, tied them with old shoelaces, and crowded into trucks which bumped them over the road to Baccarat and left them at the paymaster's office. There they received their formal discharge papers, the 'remark' lines of which

read, 'Honorably discharged by reason of accepting commission as temporary Second Lieutenant in the National Army,' their back pay, and the information that no one knew the location of any of the divisions to which they had been assigned.

Believing that I might find Straight in one of the hospitals in the city, I obtained his discharge paper and went with Mitchell and Gordan to division headquarters to inquire for the location of our new divisions. There they were unknown also. 'Go to Paris to find out,' suggested one of the officers to whom we spoke. 'You can travel anywhere on those orders. They say, "The travel directed is necessary in the military service."' This advice, unofficial though it was, agreed with our intentions; we meant to go to Paris, anyway, to buy our officers' uniforms and equipment. We had dinner with Fisher, a former member of our company who had recently been working at division headquarters, and arranged to spend the night in his room in a private house.

We visited the telegraph office where I dispatched a telegram home: 'Commissioned. Address Second Division, A.E.F.' Most of the men included a request for money along with the good news which they sent home, for they had not saved enough money to go far toward the purchase of an officer's outfit. I was blessed among a thousand, for I had an untouched letter of credit, thoughtfully given me by my father at the last moment before my departure from Camp Upton, and had also saved some three hundred and fifty francs.

I hunted up the big hospital and located Straight, whom I found walking about, apparently in good health again, for the hives had left him as suddenly as they had come.

'Here's your discharge,' I said.

'Oh! Boy,' exclaimed his companion. 'Imagine that. A free man again.'

'Not for long,' supplemented Straight, pointing to the 'remark' line.

'We're going to Paris to-morrow,' I went on. 'You've got to come along.'

'I'll do it if I have to break out of here by force,' answered Straight. 'Can I sleep with you to-night?'

'You've got a bed here. You'd better stay,' I suggested. 'We've only one bed for a quartette.'

''Nuf sed. I'll stay. Where'll I meet you?'

'At the station, at eight o'clock to-morrow morning. The train leaves at eight-fifteen. I'll get you a travel order.'

That night four of us slept in one double bed, but it was a real bed, so what did the crowd matter? I copied my own travel order, substituting Straight's name for mine, certified that it was a true copy, and had it validated by the stamp of the Assistant Provost Marshal's office. We met at the railroad station, which was crowded with new lieutenants; some still disguised as sergeants — like ourselves; some distinguished by gold bars alone; and some conspicuous in Sam Browne belts, ridiculously resplendent in contrast to the trench uniforms which they surmounted.

When it came our turn at the ticket window, instead of the usual call of 'Paris,' I substituted 'Nancy.' It was a big city, we knew. We would stop over there at least one train, to dine at a hotel.

The Kaiser and I have one thing in common. We never dined at the Café de la Comédie, Place Stanislas, Nancy. But our reasons are different. The excessively

expensive look of the café kept me away. General Castelnau's Second French Army kept the Kaiser away, and that in spite of the fact that he was ready for a triumphal entry — white gloves, most imperial helmet, and all.

Judging by the looks of the city when I landed there in July, 1918, the Kaiser's disappointment was deeper than mine ever grew to be. It had not been forgotten in the four years since 1914. During the month before my visit his airplanes had dropped bombs on 'la capitale de la Lorraine' for thirty nights out of thirty. Most of the giants had been directed at the railroad station and yards, but many had fallen elsewhere in the city.

The glass roofs of the freight shed and platform contained hardly an unbroken pane; a five-storied hotel across the park from the station stood with the interior of every room exposed; the other buildings near by were heavily shuttered; the gray stone façade of one almost regal private dwelling was pitted where the fragments of a bomb had struck; and although the church across the street was damaged to the extent of being entirely windowless, the tramway and pavement had been repaired so as to show no sign. From among the cobblestones of the Place Thiers, where the station busses congregated at train time, rose three low cement hoods, like subway entrances, protecting the flight of stairs leading into a huge, electrically lighted dugout. Similar refuges were located elsewhere throughout the city and people were assigned regular places in them, just as the troops were assigned positions in the lifeboat upon embarking for overseas.

At the Crédit Lyonnaise, where I cashed part of my letter of credit, the floor was piled high with sandbags.

These made the shored-up cellar bombproof, but elevated me so far above the teller that I was obliged to bend down to him over the top of the lattice instead of thrusting my hand through the opening where business would have been transacted in normal times.

On the rounded cupola of a building overlooking the Place Thiers and on the Hôtel de Ville were rosettes of black-mouthed horns from which the tormented voices of the *alerté* sirens bellowed forth whenever an enemy plane crossed the front twenty-five kilometers away.

But this severely punished city that exhibited in that very Hôtel de Ville twelve-foot highly polished and beautifully machined bombs, grooved but unexploded by their fall on its housetops, seemed marvelously peaceful and attractive to Straight and myself. In fact, though I later spent many months in Paris, I shall always remember Nancy as the 'fairest' city — I quote from any oration you choose — that I saw in France.

On leaving the train, Straight, Gordan, Pettingil, Fisher, Mitchell, and I proceeded through the Porte Stanislas and down the broad street of identical name in search of a restaurant where we could dine right. We found one. We didn't get much to eat, but just the same we called the affair a 'real meal'; every refinement of linen, silver, and china, and long waits between the courses. Since we had eaten little fruit except in the form of jam for two months past, the huge strawberries and tiny bananas, hardly the size of an Arlington sausage, interested us even more than the queer and extensive assortment of *hors d'œuvres*.

After sitting long and luxuriously over the coffee in true French style, we made for the street again, this time to buy clean suits of underclothes. Our appear-

ance, we thought, might wait till we got to Paris, but we *must* have clean underclothes and get a hotel room in which to dress before the day was much older. But our plans changed quickly when we saw a display of American officers' uniforms in a tailor shop across the way. We went into the shop and priced the suits. Gordan tried one which had been made to the measure of an aviator who had not come back. It fitted perfectly. Made hopeful by his luck I, too, allowed the tailor to shake me into one. Alterations seemed necessary, but the man promised to complete them in half an hour. Gordan and I ordered the suits, and as soon as the proprietor had accompanied us to the bank to oversee the cashing of a part of my letter of credit, the work was begun.

Straight and I then proceeded to a shoestore where we bought American-made russet boots, light socks, and leather puttees, and to a department store that furnished us with Sam Browne belts, suits of cotton underwear in russet brown, and white handkerchiefs. A clerk obligingly sewed the blue facing of the infantry onto our caps.

Upon going back to the tailor shop, we found that Gordan had got his uniform and gone. My suit fitted well, and when I had put it on and pinned a gold bar on each shoulder and another on the front of my cap, I looked more like an officer than I felt.

It was time for supper then. We had eaten expensively at noon and had to come back to earth for the rest of our stay. We could not find an inexpensive-looking café on any one of the main business streets, so we hailed a man in the uniform of a captain of the American Red Cross and explained what we wanted. He mentioned his name — Captain McBride — and

led us to a restaurant exclusively for officers and N.C.O.'s of the Allied forces in the building of the Cour d'Appel, just out of the Place Stanislas — a beautifully appointed place, serving delicious meals at prices that would have shamed the mussiest of American lunch wagons.

Gordan and Mitchell joined us, and we stayed in Nancy until Thursday night. The coaches on the late train out were packed as usual, so we slept sitting up. Whosever shoulder appeared beside us served as a pillow. Just before we were nearing Paris, traffic was stopped while a German plane that seemed to be maneuvering over the railroad yards was assailed and finally driven away by the barrage.

The Gare de l'Est was a place of immense bustle, but we were concerned with getting a taxi rather than with observing the activity of the crowd about us. Taxis were in demand and drivers would not listen to fares who could not speak French, so for half an hour we shouted ourselves hoarse. Finally we got a vehicle and drove to the Hôtel Métropole, Rue Marbeuf, where we rejoined our 'B' Company friends, who had gone there on the recommendation of some pre-war visitor to Paris.

That unknown person had made no mistake. The proprietress of the hotel spoke English, which was convenient, and had some rooms to let, which was miraculous. Straight and I secured a large, luxuriously furnished room with twin beds, adjoining the room of Pettingil and Mitchell. The rates, that included breakfast served in the room, were extraordinarily moderate, only eight francs a day. The formality of registering and filling out the blanks required by the Parisian police from every arriving guest was soon over.

Straight and I stepped out to take our first real look at the city, for in our hurried motor drive up the Avenue des Champs-Élysées we had had little time to observe anything except the fact that there were no private motor vehicles on the streets and that conveyances consisted wholly of taxis, horse-drawn vehicles, or blue military motors with their conspicuous stenciled numbers. Notre Dame, the Louvre, the Madeleine, or the Opéra may be more the real sights of Paris than the Eiffel Tower — I do not speak of the Arc-de-Triomphe de l'Étoile, which is the symbolic heart of not merely Paris, but the whole of France — but no guide is needed to show one the way to the Eiffel Tower. We started for it.

On the way we experienced a new sensation. Nancy had not had an American invasion, so while there we had received no salutes, for we either recognized every wearer of the O.D. as a second lieutenant as new as ourselves, and consequently undeserving of a salute, or were obliged to make the first move in saluting some major or colonel. The train is no place for saluting. Consequently, we had almost forgotten that we were not the same men that we had been when we left Baccarat; that our uniforms had changed us. Two enlisted men approaching along the Rue François I^{er} did not disturb us at all. Suddenly, at about two paces from us, they raised their right hands to their right eyebrows with a quick ducking motion. I waved my hand more or less in simulation of an informal salute and had partly uttered a 'Hello' when I was struck by the fact that I didn't know the fellows. 'What's up? Perhaps Straight knows them,' I thought. Not until they had gone by did it suddenly occur to me that I had received a salute for the first time; that I was disguised as an

officer in spite of my youth on which my host in Nancy had commented, and that I would henceforth have to look alive to respond to salutes as well as to give them to superior officers. And here I had missed a chance to do the thing well the first time; had ignominiously shown how green I was.

By night we visited the theaters. By day we shopped and saw the sights. And at every chance my companions visited their banks in the anxious hope that the money they had cabled for had arrived.

We saw Paris as thoroughly as we could, but our consciences were not easy, for at any time of the day or night we could go to the Champs-Élysées and see the steady procession of American open trucks interspersed with infrequent covered ambulances that had been rolling down it since the evening of July 18th, when the Americans began their attack on the left of the Soissons salient. Each truck was filled with men for the Paris hospitals. The fellows were bandaged just as they had been when they left the field dressing-station at the front, forty miles away. Some were without blouses or hats; all were mud-covered, unshaven, pale; some were singing, some groaning, but most were passively silent. And the procession was still in progress when we left the city.

At the bank we met a little fellow from the Second Division — our new division which we had not yet located — in a fresh uniform of hospital issue. He was trying to obtain a loan. 'The Second's fighting at Soissons,' he told us. 'Me an' my squad — I'm a corporal, but they haven't any stripes at number 57 — were crawling up on a big Boche howitzer. Got right in front of the thing, back of a bunch of young trees, so as we could see the Heinies all running round, an'

they fired her off. Too blamed close. Skinned every darn bit of clothing off me and blew my glasses into the middle of the Pacific. I've got to have some cash to buy some glasses. Can't read the street signs without 'em.'

Yes, the Second was fighting. There was a war going on — and we were in Paris. Straight and I resolved to leave on Friday whether his money came or not.

As for the news — well, the Boches were being driven back.

On Friday morning, July 26th, Straight and I reported for the first time at the office of the Assistant Provost Marshal, 10 Rue Sainte-Anne, to have our travel orders stamped and to find out definitely the location of the Second. 'Take a train at the Gare du Nord, go to Le Bourget, and inquire of the A.P.M. there,' were all the instructions we got. A call at the bank discovered that Straight's money had not come, but he left orders for it to be deposited to his credit on arrival. We hurried through another round of sightseeing and good eating, paid our hotel bill, urged our four companions to join us, but without result, and took the six-thirty train to Le Bourget.

There we discovered that the railroad of the Second was at Nanteuil-le-Haudouin, about fifty kilometers out. A ration train with a few passenger coaches was making up. The wooden seats of the third-class compartment, into which we wedged ourselves with four newly made Marine officers, seemed inhospitable enough to warrant our 'borrowing' the blue cushions from an empty coach on the next track. That night, thanks to those cushions, we slept well, so well, in fact, that we did not awaken until the train had passed Nanteuil and stopped at Villers, eight kilometers beyond

division headquarters. Hurriedly completing a toilet that consisted of buttoning the collars of our blouses and putting on our caps, we jumped out onto the platform and inquired the way to Nanteuil from the first American we saw.

'What outfit do you go to?' he said. 'I'm the adjutant of the 9th Infantry. I've got the list of new men assigned to us.'

Straight's name was on that list. Mine was not. Since I would not be assigned in the Marine brigade, it was clear that my regiment was the 23d. So we separated, Straight going with the providential adjutant.

CHAPTER XI

ROSIÈRES AND BACK TO NANCY

A TRAIN to Paris was expected soon — though it did not arrive for three hours — and the station was filled with American lieutenants and sergeants anxiously waiting its coming. The officers were heavily loaded with a profusion of dirty, bulging musette bags, captured map cases and field glasses, their own field glasses, steel helmets, gas masks, and automatics. Their blouses were almost hidden under the maze of supporting straps and their necks seemed to be hopelessly entangled. The sergeants carried packs, but were otherwise unburdened except for a few souvenirs. Every member of the company appeared subtilely different from the officers and men I had known heretofore; they were evidently veterans of some standing, for the wrinkles radiating from the buttons of their blouses proclaimed that the garments had been long in use, their skin was magnificently weathered, and their faces were just touched with an age greater than that of their years. I felt out of place in the gathering, but approached one fellow to inquire if he could direct me to the headquarters of the 23d Infantry. He was talking with another — and what did I hear? 'Yes, I got it,' he said joyfully. 'I'm on my way back to the States. It took some pulling. When that order came in I ——'

He was on his way back to the States! He had a service stripe — and that was before service stripes had become common. He was a veteran and he looked his part! And I, who was just beginning to get into things, was going into his division. My own career seemed

short and inadequate and I felt out of place in the man's presence, but I did manage to step up and put my question.

'Sure,' he replied. 'The 23d's just down the line there in Ormoy-Villers. This here's only the station for the town. You'll find the house by asking.'

His prediction was fulfilled, and it was not long before I had reported to the regimental adjutant, who consulted his list, told me that I was assigned to the third battalion, and instructed me that a limber would take the clothing roll which I had been carrying and that I might follow behind it to Rosières, some six kilometers away.

In the street beside the limber I found a chaplain — identified by a silver Latin cross on either shoulder — who had just entrusted his own property to the care of the driver, and since that indicated that he, like myself, was bound for the third battalion, I introduced myself. He was Chaplain William E. Patrick whom I later came to know quite well. In the process of becoming acquainted, which went on while we stood in the chow line of the headquarters company, sat on a limber eating, and walked slowly along the sandy but well-shadowed cart path to Rosières, where the battalion was located, I learned that he had come from New Bedford, Massachusetts, where he had been the assistant of the former rector of the Episcopal Church in my home town, that he knew the Reverend William C. Gordon, the recent pastor of my own church in Auburndale, Massachusetts, and that he had but lately obtained his commission and left the Y.M.C.A. to which he had been attached.

We came suddenly out of the woods into the main street of Rosières, an unusual entry, for from every

other approach the town was visible across the fields for a long distance. Soon thereafter we arrived at the 'big house,' evidently the former home of an extremely well-to-do person. It was built of red brick, weathered, covered with moss and with grass cropping from the interstices, and surrounded a court which was darkened by the low, spreading branches of several trees whose roots had heaved up the brick pavement in irregular ridges. A Gothic arch admitted to the court. On one side were the gatekeeper's rooms, now used as the headquarters of the machine-gun company, whose little carts were wheeled close up against the courtyard walls; and, on the other, a plain wall that connected with one wing of the main house. This wing was used by the battalion doctor as an infirmary. The main house proper filled the entire side of the court opposite the gate. Its spacious rooms were entirely bare, the walls were stripped of paper, the baseboards had gone to feed some brazier fires — only the ornamented ceiling remained as an evidence of the grandeur. From the stone terrace one looked out upon what had evidently been a lovely formal garden and was still lovely in the unkempt confusion of four years of abandonment.

Captain Eaton, a young West Pointer, who was commanding the battalion, received us on horseback, and, at a word from Sergeant-Major Sullivan, an invaluably energetic person of diminutive size, assigned me to 'I' Company.

'Lieutenant Wade's got that company,' he said. 'He'll be glad to see you come. You know we just got out from Soissons and we're almost cleaned out of officers. He's in the room there.'

I went into a huge ground-floor room that served as

a billet for nearly all the officers of the battalion. It contained nothing but a series of bunks consisting of chicken wire tacked onto raised wooden frames, and the baggage of the occupants.

First Lieutenant Wade, an old army man who, though he usually dispatched his business with officers in a few words, could talk unendingly to his company, received me and said he guessed I could have the fourth platoon now commanded by Sergeant Bohon. That was all there was to that. He resumed his conversation with Lieutenant Peterson, who had just returned from the hospital, where he had gone after being shot in the nose at Belleau Wood.

Wade, it seemed, was worried because the notice of a wound which he had received at the same time, and from which he was considered cured, had just appeared in a casualty list in the 'New York Herald' (Paris edition). He was afraid his wife would see it at home and think that he had been hit again. Peterson wasn't married, so he couldn't reply in that vein, but he entertained by rehearsing vigorously the story of how he got his wound. He had been lying in the wheat signaling back to his sergeant when he felt a blow as if four mules had kicked him in the face simultaneously, and he did an involuntary back somersault. A machine-gun bullet coming from the side had struck him. The only evidence remaining was a slight depression just in the tip of his nose.

Lieutenant O'Brien, an artillery officer detailed to the infantry for some unknown reason, and also assigned to 'I' Company, joined the group and for my benefit told the story of how he had found the company. He had received his orders during the Soissons drive, had gone to the railhead, followed the division into ac-

tion, searched about in the confusion of the field until he located the battalion staff in a shell hole, and at last had been sent to a company where he was the only officer besides Wade.

Other stories went about. The battalion supply officer told how the much-admired Colonel Eliot had been wounded with most of his staff when a shell fell among the group. Wade tallied with a description of the wooded ravines before Soissons which the Germans held so well. O'Brien added a vivid description of a glade where he had seen a large number of corpses of French-Moroccans in lifelike attitudes where one shell had struck them down. Dr. Martin, the battalion medical officer, an amusing, boisterous person with an Ala*bam*a accent, described his activities.

It was an ideal initiation ceremony for me. In two hours I heard the second American attack fought over in incident and detail; I learned that the Second Division already had a history that it was proud of and that I had indeed been well assigned.

Late that afternoon Sergeant Bohon came in to see me, as I had asked him to do, gave me a list of the men in the platoon, told me what he could about the personality and capabilities of each, and made suggestions about squad divisions and the assignments of the noncoms. It appeared that the company had suffered casualties of about forty-five per cent and that my new platoon was also reduced in that proportion. He turned over to me about fifteen letters which it was my duty to censor, and during the ensuing hour I performed my first task as an officer — reading those letters and affixing my 'O.K.'

To get the uttermost morsel of the satisfaction from the realization that I was now my own censor which

the task brought home to me, I finished the evening and my candle simultaneously by writing a letter home.

Sunday, the 28th of July, was, for the most part, a quiet and restful day. Replacements for the company arrived and were assigned and distributed by the first sergeant almost without creating a ripple in the calm. I added the new names to my platoon list and found that the seven squads were nearly full. Letter-censoring occupied a part of the time; speculation about the new major — Peyton by name — who had just arrived occupied more of it, and the cracks were filled in by stories of past experiences.

About noon another second lieutenant — Derrill G. Elmore — was assigned to 'I' Company. We spent the afternoon getting acquainted, and in the process I learned that his overseas experience was already quite extensive. He had come over with the Forty-Second (Rainbow) Division in the fall of 1917 and been gassed while at the front in Lorraine. After recovering from this experience and returning to his outfit, he had been sent to an officers' school where he fell into a concrete target pit and dislocated his back. All this left him calm and unruffled; his quiet Southern drawl was a pleasure to hear, and his quizzical smile, with its accompanying puckering of the mouth and crinkling of the corners of his eyes, lent a real charm to his every remark.

We visited the near-by German detention camp where prisoners newly brought from the front were held temporarily until work was found for them in the rear. It consisted of about an acre of ground enclosed by two twelve-foot barbed-wire fences with overhanging tops, spaced about nine feet apart. At one corner

was a watch-tower mounting a concealed Hotchkiss machine gun; the machine guns in the other three corners were set up in plain sight between the fences. A mess-hall and cook-shack occupied one end of the clearing. The place was worn bare of grass and filled with the burrows made by the prisoners who had no other shelter unless they had been fortunate enough to retain an overcoat or blanket.

As for the Boches themselves, they were amusing, or would have been if it were not for the fact that there is something pathetic, perhaps disgusting, in the sight of men herded together helplessly under such conditions. Of course they were unshaven and dirty, of course their uniforms bagged at the knees and hung in masses of wrinkles, of course buttons were missing everywhere, and nearly every forage cap was robbed of its circular cockade. But however miserable the appearance of the men, they wore smiles and were ambitious enough to try to better their condition. A group of thirty or forty Americans was gathered at the outer fence at one side of the enclosure. Opposite that point and within the inner fence was a much larger group of Germans. Four or five Americans in the front row would hold up single packs of cigarettes or an orange, the Germans inside would tally by displaying what they had to trade — buttons, paper marks, the black and white ribbon of the Iron Cross, cockades from their forage caps, aluminum rings decorated with Prussian or Saxon coats of arms in colored enamel, and rings made from aluminum horseshoe nails.

My own experience demonstrates the method of trading. I worked my way into the front row of Americans and held up an orange. A smiling German of about thirty years who had gained the front row

opposite me held out a pair of buttons taken from his coat. I shook my head in refusal and, by encircling the forefinger of one hand with a small twig that lay on the ground near by, indicated that I wanted a ring. He dug into his pocket and produced an aluminum ring which he held out. It appeared satisfactory, so I nodded a 'yes' and pointed to a spot farther down the wire and away from the crowd. He and I both took up the new position and went through several pantomime rehearsals of a simultaneous tossing over of the articles of trade. At last I gave the signal and we tossed; the ring came into my hand all right, the orange bounced from his hand and rolled away. Three other Germans started toward it, but he dove headlong and recovered his prize.

As Elmore and I walked back to town, we saw several indications of the international character of the war. Not far from the prison camp was a camp occupied by Chinese coolies imported by the British to work on the roads. On the outer edge of the town were several billets where were visible the snappy gray uniforms of the despised Italians who had run away on the Piave and had been sent to exile in France to work on the roads like the Chinese. And of course there were French soldiers strolling about, and two old *poilus* on the bridge fishing and catching nothing. Not far from our billet was a small place, surrounded, like all but the very poorest places, with a wall. But this wall was different from others; it contained a huge gap where a supply truck had left the road and ploughed recklessly through. From beyond the gap came the strains of song and piano music. We sat down on the wreckage to listen, and soon an English voice called, 'Come in, Yank, an' join the party.'

It was an Australian-speaking, and almost as he spoke he emerged from behind a bush and came over to us. When he saw our Sam Browne belts, he flushed a bit, realizing that he had made a mistake, but he repeated his invitation. We accepted and stepped in to join the crowd of four or five English sergeants, three Australians, and two Canadians. They were all dressed in their Sunday best — neat uniforms set off splendidly by polished rows of leather pouches stretched diagonally from shoulder to waist, leather whistle cords over their left shoulders like a *fourragère*, glistening puttees, heavy boots, and silvered spur chains.

Our arrival had a dampening effect on the party, for it was obviously a mistake to drag in a couple of officers, but after we had told them to forget us, had accepted the proffered chairs, and had urged them to proceed with the music, they began to 'hit their stride' again. A piano, which had apparently stood in the garden ever since the ground floor of the house fell in, was the chief instrument, but an accordion helped some. One of the Australians was an amusing scout; he entertained with a series of ditties of his own country, similar to the 'Cowboy's Lament' and other sad ballads from our West. An Englishman, just a bit the worse — or perhaps it was the better — for too much wine, finished off with a series of the latest London hits.

Monday was my first day of active duty as a lieutenant and it was far less trying than I had expected. Several things worked to my advantage and, I hope, helped to cover up my inexperience which might otherwise have been most conspicuous. A new series of combat formations had been evolved at regimental

headquarters following the Soissons attack. Since its details had been published but two days before, I knew as much about them as any one. Only one of the officers in the company had worked with it recently; many of the men were new; and, best of all, no one looked askance at me.

The company fell in at eight o'clock, and as I assumed my place in front of my platoon the back of my neck burned red, I am sure. If I had had to make an extended speech I should have stammered, but fortunately there was nothing for me to say. Formal introductions were not necessary; one simply took command. Lieutenant Wade said his say and finished with, 'March the company off to the field, Mr. Ranlett.'

I gave 'Squads right.' To my relief it proved to be the right command. A platoon, I found, did not look at all the same from six paces in front as it did from a sergeant's position in the rear, and I had been greatly puzzled to know how I should turn the squads to move the company away to the left as I faced them. If that problem hadn't been puzzling me all during Wade's address I might have turned them the wrong way.

The morning passed off easily. A large stubblefield served as a drill ground and we moved about in close order and played violent athletic games for two hours. Then we graduated to trials of the new combat formation. The sound of my whistle gave me confidence, my sweeping arm signals, and the loud voice necessary to communicate with the sergeants far ahead and behind added to it, and the whole operation went off smoothly until we came to leave the field. Just at that moment a traveling ordnance repair shop arrived. The entire company was lined up and each Springfield inspected by the officers that accompanied the shop. Some pieces

were found defective and were detained for repairs, which were made during the afternoon, but most were returned as O.K. We were an hour late to the noon meal — a genuinely distressing occurrence.

That afternoon orders came for us to march three kilometers to Fresnoy-le-Luat to bathe the company. I have described the operation of bathing before; it was varied only by the delousing process to which the clothes of all the men were subjected.

That evening after I had made sure that I might retain the blanket which Chaplain Patrick had loaned me upon my discovering that the supply sergeant had none available, I bought some ham and sardines as extra travel rations.

Three o'clock on Tuesday morning found us already on the way to the Ormoy-Villers station where we were to entrain at five for points unannounced. Noon found us still there, and it was not until two-thirty that the train arrived. An hour later we passed Le Bourget, rolled on by the walls of Paris, and turned east. That night I slept with five other officers well packed into a compartment of the coach on the rear of the train assigned to the battalion. Shortly after noon the next day we passed through Toul, and at three o'clock stopped in the yards at Nancy, the city I had left with so many pleasant memories just thirteen days before. Astonishing and unexpected! Rumor had had it that we were going far to the rear to give us time to work the replacements well into the outfit.

The 23d was billeted in a *caserne* not far from the thermal baths, the great swimming-tank. The *caserne* consisted of four-story stone buildings forming three sides of a court and facing in upon a great bare drill ground. Echeloned behind the central building at

either end were smaller buildings, set aside as officers' quarters and offices. The whole plant was surrounded by a high stone and iron fence and could be entered only at the carefully guarded main gate. The white-walled rooms were filled with even rows of beds fitted with straw bedsacks and gray-brown blankets. Everything appeared scrupulously clean and luxurious in comparison with the average billet, but it is not well to be too curious; if you chanced to close any of the doors, you were startled to find that the side that had been folded against the wall was well populated with retiring cockroaches — 'magnified cooties' they were called.

The junior officer always gets the job of O.D. — officer of the day — upon arrival at a new post, and since I qualified I was appointed. While I was engaged in signing passes for the favored few whom the sergeants had selected as deserving, Private Hanson appeared, contrite and crestfallen — probably hungry as well. The day previous he had taken a fancy to some town that we were passing through and had dropped off to have a vacation. Apparently his funds were too low to permit him to enjoy himself much, for he had soon jumped onto a train loaded with Marines and followed us to Nancy. I was too new to the job, too unfamiliar with the methods of delivering a good bawling-out, and too slow of wit to think of a severe punishment, so after making a few sadly vague trials I sent Hanson to the platoon.

Just as Hanson left the door, a shot sounded in a room down the corridor and I rushed out to see what was going on. One of the men had been cleaning his automatic — an evidence of praiseworthy zeal — and had pulled the trigger as soon as he took out the maga-

zine. The cartridge that remained in the chamber exploded and the bullet, passing close in front of the man's face, struck the ceiling and showered him with plaster. He was the whitest and most scared man I ever saw; his hand trembled, his eyes seemed to beseech mercy, he could hardly speak. The affair was evidently an accident; certainly it did not encourage any one else to be reckless with his gun.

It was ordered that in case the Boche planes should come over the city, the barracks should be evacuated and the companies should march to designated fields near by, where they were to deploy and take shelter. An air bomb dropped on a building would do much greater execution than one dropped in an open field. 'I' Company drew a race-track about four blocks from the building. It was really an excellent place for the purpose, for between the track and the central green was a deep ditch in which all could lie down at wide intervals.

Fortunately no planes visited Nancy during our stay, so our nights were undisturbed. That first evening I looked up Straight at the 9th Infantry *caserne*, not far down the street, and found him just giving instructions to the guard. He had drawn the arduous job of commander of the guard, but managed to get away, show me his room, and accompany me and the lieutenants of his own company to the officers' restaurant with which we had become familiar on our former visit. The separation which had affected me so much had not been for long. We dined together twice more during our stay in the city, and when I left him at his billet on Saturday night we were confident that we should be able to meet frequently.

But this is anticipating too much. During the three

days that followed our arrival in Nancy we spent the mornings at close-order drill. Things went smoothly on the whole, though once Colonel Malone, the regimental commander, saw me marching on the wrong side of my platoon and quickly corrected me. On one occasion the entire regiment was formed on the parade ground and put through a few evolutions at the command of the colonel, who sat far out in front on horseback and made himself heard by all of the more than three thousand men.

Pay-day came, giving me a chance to learn the procedure of filling out an officer's pay voucher. The colonel addressed several officers' meetings and explained his policies of command. Afternoons the entire command, except enlisted men undergoing punishment, were free to roam about the city. The thermal baths were naturally one of the greatest attractions and special reductions in price were made for men in uniform. I visited Captain McBride, my acquaintance of two weeks previous, at his Red Cross warehouse and begged him for two blankets, since I could get none in the regiment and did not want to deprive Chaplain Patrick of his extra one too long. McBride kindly supplied me with some beautifully fleecy gray blankets, far superior to the issue type, and added a number of sewing-kits and a quantity of chewing gum for me to distribute to my platoon. It seemed to me that the Red Cross was making good use of the huge fund it collected in the States.

Late Sunday afternoon we left Nancy and marched away along the road that follows the Moselle Canal through Maxeville, the home of a widely advertised beer, to Frouard, a small village, scattered like countless others along both sides of a single main street.

The march was a pleasant one, for the road was shaded with large trees, the sun was low, and the pace was easy. I had my first opportunity to become acquainted with some of the men in my platoon. Sergeant Beaudry, I found, came from Uxbridge, Massachusetts; Sergeant Bohon lived nearer home in Cambridge; Corporal Scopolitis had enlisted from Boston. Corporal Cobb conversed with me for some time and we both 'reminisced' about the curious change of habits made by a few months of life in the army. I recall particularly that the subject of bathing came up, as it did so frequently in France, and that we both remarked on our different attitudes toward baths at home and abroad. When they were easy to get, they were not in demand; when there was barely enough water to drink, every one clamored for a swim.

I was billeted with some extremely pleasant people who treated me cordially, assigning me an elegantly furnished guest-room, showing me about their house and garden, apologizing that every window in their home had been broken by a falling air bomb, serving me with a specially prepared meal, and conversing pleasantly all the time. It seemed to make no difference that I spoke practically no French, though fortunately I could understand their brand fairly well, and that they had no English. The kindly old gentleman showed me pictures of one son, a prisoner in Germany, told me about another son who had been killed, asked about my own home, and looked at the few snapshots I carried. His cunning little granddaughter sat on my knee, played with my luminous compass, and sang a little song for my entertainment. The dog and the cat rushed frequently into the group and helped to make the scene a thoroughly domestic

one. Grandmother sat near by silently knitting, but finally she suggested that her husband had forgotten something and he jumped up to get a bottle of wine. My refusal of the proffered drink mystified him, so he tried me further with champagne and whiskey. My persistent refusal appeared rude, I fear, in spite of my best efforts to prevent that effect, but he soon let the matter rest and brought me the water for which I asked.

On the morning of Monday, August 5th, we marched a few kilometers to a wooded hill slope near Marbache — the town from which the sector took its name — and retired into the shelter of the trees, apparently because we were so near the lines that it would be tempting the enemy aircraft if we were to advance farther by daylight. At ten that night, after a long day of killing time, we got under way again. At first only the white road was visible in the solid blackness, but at every halt the tiny glowing points of lighted cigarettes appeared and had to be quenched by quickly called commands of 'Lights out.'

We crossed the Moselle in single file on a narrow footbridge; we doubled back on our own track and crossed again; we saw the sky lighted by the flickering glare of a barrage — not so distant — and heard its roar; and at last, passing a field filled with the tall poles on which hops are trained — truly a weird sight at night — we came to a group of wooden Adrian barracks. The officers saw that there was room for the men in the building assigned to them and then sought their own identical quarters. In the feeble light of three candles the long building, which could easily accommodate a hundred men, looked utterly cheerless. The dozen or so officers appeared lost in it; and most of

them felt lost, for the supply wagon had not come and they were without blankets or overcoats, destined to 'sleep cold.' I was thankful that I had been obstinate enough to refuse all midday counsel about the foolishness of carrying my own blanket. It may be no easy job to carry your own pack, but it is worth it. I think that Elmore agreed with me; at any rate, we both slept in the Red Cross blanket while the rest of the assemblage struggled unsuccessfully with the two o'clock chill.

CHAPTER XII

THE MARBACHE SECTOR

BELOW to the east a quiet forest land margined by a gray curtain of mist and a black wall of cloud. Hesitating against the wall the perfect arch of a rainbow. Behind to the west a long lane winding steeply down between green hedges, and brown cropped fields to a red-roofed village, an idle river, and a patchwork quilt of fields. Smiling through the clouds of the vanishing storm the jovial sun. On one hand the lichen-mottled stone face of the village church, the tricolor cockades on the black crosses in the churchyard, the rich luster of drooping hawthorn branches, a pleasant grouping of horizon-blue uniforms, the thrill of music from the light brass of a French military band; on the other, the vacant faces of sparsely windowed houses with gaping, white-rimmed courtyard doors. Sainte-Geneviève on the hilltop presented a striking picture as the khaki column passed through it at the close of the afternoon following a day of idleness at Ville-au-Val — the town in the valley.

The French, whom we were relieving in the Marbache sector near Pont-à-Mousson on the Moselle River, were giving us a send-off. Hence the band playing spiritedly in sight of the invisible front somewhere in the woods below. That seemed wrong. But I had not been to the front there and did not know how far away it was, and I had to admit the French had and did. Besides, I was inclined to take the war more seriously than they, for I had not lived with it so long.

Nothing untoward happened. The music did not precipitate the hostile artillery fire that I half-expected, or cause a single enemy aircraft to appear from above the withdrawing clouds. It was cheering to see the rainbow flash out more brilliantly as we moved toward the front and to realize that we might not have rain again — all night.

An hour later, though the road still stretched away ahead of us undamaged, smooth, hung overhead at short intervals with motley drops of camouflage, we turned aside into the difficult twilight of the woods to occupy the position pointed out to us by our French guides. And such a position it was! As my platoon was not assigned to guard duty, I visited only the barracks and the officers' house. Barracks and a house; it seemed just as singular as a band concert accompanying a relief!

The house among the trees was suggestive at once of a set of boxes designed to slide one into the other and of the home of some watchmaker from a fairy tale. The largest of the three sections — clapboarded with split logs, roofed with red tiles, and surmounted by a vane-tipped clock-tower with a four-faced clock that didn't go — contained one room. The room was fitted with two beds made of chicken wire stretched on a rude frame, a cuckoo clock — that did go, a table, two chairs and a seven-foot mirror in a gilded frame! The glass in the windows was whole. The mirror showed not a trace of a crack. Surely the sector must be a quiet one. No other evidence was necessary to show that the band concert could not possibly do any harm. The other two sections of the house, which were made respectively of earth-filled revetting — for all the world like a coarse basket — and of boards covered

with tar paper were furnished only with the same sort of crude beds as the main apartment.

I elected to occupy the third and smallest apartment and rigged up a shelf with a candle upon it near the head of the bed so that I could read in a luxurious, reclining position if I should be so fortunate as to have anything to read. It was not until the next day that I discovered how well I had chosen. Beneath the floor of my room, and reached by the removal of two loose planks, was a trench — partly filled with water — where one might seek shelter in case of a bombardment. The feature was exclusive.

The next day I examined the position more thoroughly. It was absolutely different from any other I had seen; it was all aboveground. To be sure, there was a huge, water-soaked dugout near the barracks, but the men lived in the barracks. Duckboards led about among the trees from barracks to barracks, to the cook-house and the stables, and back to the *carrefour* (four corners) beyond which lay the battalion headquarters dugout, the hospital dugout, and the French military cemetery.

In that cemetery were a profusion of black Latin crosses with painted arms and heads that marked the graves of the Christian French, great black stars and crescents for the Moslem French, and plain Latin crosses for the Germans. Since the sector was quiet and usually undisturbed, there was also the same accumulation of artificial flowers and decorative memorials of glass beads that make all French civilian cemeteries appear so strange to one used to the more simple decorations of an American Protestant graveyard.

It was most interesting to study the white-lettered

inscriptions on the crosses; to follow the dates and circumstances of each man's death and thus gain a picture of the activities of the sector; to note the succession of regiments represented; to reflect on the strange and distant countries from which the Colonials had come; to imagine the scene of the bestowal of each wreath; to think how fortunate the Germans were to be thus respectfully buried.

But that is getting away from the position. There was, as I have said, a shed in which the rolling kitchen was blocked up. Tables and benches dotted the woods all about. At meal times the men formed in line, received their food in their mess-kits, and found places with their friends. The company officers ate at a separate table and, I must admit it, received special favors in the form of an abundance of condensed milk, special cuts of meat, fritters, griddle cakes, and puddings. On the night of August 7th — I find by referring to my letter of that date — we had stew (it was better than 'slum'), fried potatoes, hot baking-powder biscuits, hardtack, coffee with milk and sugar, apple jelly, and apple pie. It was the first time I had eaten a piece of pie since April 4th, two days before I left the States. Pie was not a French institution. A few days later the meal was even more elaborate; it consisted of stew (again), fresh tomatoes, corn fritters, hot biscuits, coffee and cow's milk (to distinguish it from condensed milk), apple jelly, and blueberry pie! That was the 'life of Riley.'

Our company sector was about a quarter of a mile wide. The road to the front ran through the center of it. The single trench line consisted of hundred-foot sections of revetted work raised about seven feet above the level of the ground. The bottom of the trench was

only six inches below ground level. These sections were joined by a path, or by a trench dug to the depth of six inches. The system was little more than outlined, but it was fronted by three wide bands of excellently constructed barbed-wire work, separated by shallow moats, and laid out in bays and angles so that it could be swept and criss-crossed with auto-rifle fire to the greatest advantage. A narrow-gauge railway passed through the sector near its southern limit.

This was the second line. The first line, so I was told, though I never had opportunity to verify the statement, was a mile ahead. It consisted of genuine trenches and dugouts, but was somewhat informal nevertheless. The white, well-paved road that passed through our wire led directly to it. Between it and the German lines flowed a small stream which had been dammed by one of the contending parties to form a wide defensive lake. It was said that under the French occupation of the sector the Germans washed their clothes and bathed unmolested in the lake on Tuesdays and Thursdays, and that the French enjoyed that privilege on Mondays and Wednesdays. Of course no one wanted to bathe or wash on the other three days and the quiet was more profound than ever. It was claimed by the French that when the Americans entered the sector they spoiled the whole thing by shooting at the first Germans to appear. I didn't hear any shooting, but I am willing to believe the story.

The only firing that I heard was on the numerous occasions when the distant artillery tried its hand at keeping the visiting German aircraft well above the mile limit.

One evening this activity provided an unusually pretty sight. The plane was audible long before it

could be seen. It came steadily on, the peculiar 'cr-r-r-ump' of the shells bursting near it becoming louder and louder as it approached. At last it appeared above the edge of the trees; as it did so a bright flash, like a burst of flame, appeared in the sky beside it, shot a long, snaky arm toward it. Quickly the plane was surrounded by a circle of similar flashes. They were simply the trails of white smoke from the exploding shells illuminated, like clouds, by the setting sun. The plane passed across the zenith and went on toward the rear undisturbed. I listened with interest as each new battery took up the chorus, and amused myself by counting the number of shells dispatched, the number of shells that could be seen to burst before the report of the gun that fired the first shell reached my ear, and the number of new bursts that would appear before the sound of the first burst could be heard.

We were fired upon only once and that unintentionally. It was during the period of leisure following the noon meal. A plane was being received as usual, but the sight had become so common that none of us were watching it. Suddenly the distant shriek of an approaching shell was heard. The officers sprang to the door of the cabin to shout to the men to make for the dugout. It wasn't necessary. Card-players, letter-writers, and nappers sprang up from the foot of every tree and converged like bees on the door of the dugout. All who were too distant to beat the shell fell flat. The shriek grew louder, rising in shrillness till it seemed as though it could rise no higher. Then it ceased. The shell dropped with a final swish on the hard macadam road and — instead of exploding and peppering the barracks with fragments, bounced, glittering, to the height of the tree-tops, fell again, and

rolled into the gutter. After a respectful pause of half an hour we examined it. It wasn't even a dud; it was simply the empty tail of a shrapnel shell that had been fired at the plane. But what a noise it had made in coming!

Richardson, an acquaintance of the Officers' Training School at Camp Upton, having been a battalion intelligence officer stationed in the front line of the Marbache sector, found the place more thrilling than I did. He told a story which made me more than ever glad that on my arrival in the Second Division I had not announced the fact that I had attended an intelligence school. My motive had been that it was more interesting to be with troops than to be always on special assignment, but perhaps I had little relish to personally conduct more than my natural share of night patrols.

Richardson — to return to his story — had on one occasion conducted a successful patrol into the lake country between the lines, and had returned and was walking boldly along the road toward his battalion P.C. when a German patrol, which had penetrated the lines, fired at his party from the woods. All sprang into the roadside ditches and replied, the Germans responded with a volley of potato-masher grenades, Richardson's crowd fired again, and then the Germans disappeared and the party was over. There were no casualties on either side; at least no Germans were left behind. When Richardson got into the lighted quarters of the P.C. dugout, his breath was taken away by the discovery that a bullet had grazed him, passing through his left breast-pocket from side to side, perforating his notebook and breaking his pencil.

Parsons, an acquaintance both of Camp Upton and

of the Seventy-Seventh Division Intelligence School at Éperlecques, was intelligence officer of the 9th Infantry. The Marbache sector supplied him also with a thrill. One night he took a small patrol across the river, through the Boche front line, and well into the area between the first and second lines. There he hid behind a hedge at the top of a bank near a crossroads and watched the supply wagons go by. At last there appeared a marching column of graybacks swinging along at a good pace. Some of the men were singing, some laughing and talking, some plodding on in silence. All were unsuspecting of his presence. I do not know what he derived from this experience other than the thrill of looking the Boches over at close quarters and imagining how they would treat him if they should discover him. Perhaps the knowledge that the lines were so lightly held that he could penetrate them without trouble was of some satisfaction to him; perhaps he understood and noted down some valuable gossip; perhaps he discovered the identity of the units that were facing us.

We had much leisure time during the long, sunlit evenings. I spent mine in conversation and in writing letters and censoring them, for I had nothing to read except an old copy of the 'Outlook' that I picked up I know not where. Once I secured a verbal pass and visited Straight's outfit — 'I' Company of the 9th — some half-mile away. He had been left behind in the hospital in Nancy with a recurrence of the hives which had bothered him during our trip to Nancy and Paris, so my trip was not a success. All that I got from it was a clearer picture than ever of the absolute peace and quiet of the sector. All the outfits were housed comfortably aboveground.

As a means of self-protection I had avoided learning to play poker and my observations in this area made me glad of the fact. The others who occupied the house lost much valuable sleep and burned up many long candles on account of the game, and Peterson, at least, lost so much money that he was obliged to swear off temporarily and did swear off 'forever' with many exclamations of disgust at his own foolishness.

For the most part Company 'I' worked only the standard eight-hour day. We kept double sentinels at a few posts in the trenches at all times. That was a mere formality and the duty was so divided as to be not at all irksome.

We practiced at open-order warfare. At a whistle and arm signal from its commander the platoon or the company would break from a column of squads into a squad-column formation and advance through the open woods toward some unbroken thicket. Concealed somewhere ahead — no one knew the spot — was a sergeant with a whistle. When the sergeant, who was supposed to represent an enemy machine gun, felt that he had the advancing men at his mercy he would 'open fire' by starting a series of blasts on his whistle. This was the signal for the outfits to deploy and seek cover or advance according to whatever instructions the commander should give. At times when the 'gun' was well on the flank so that my platoon might be reasonably supposed to be out of the segment of fire, I would advance at a rush hoping to flank it; at other times, when it was dead ahead, we would all seek shelter, and then I would assemble my sergeants and corporals and plan the attack.

The usual method of attack was to engage the 'gun' with V.B. grenades (rifle grenades) and rifle fire on the

front and to send an automatic rifle and grenade squad to the flanks, outside the segment of fire, to take it off its guard. It was often hard to locate a hidden 'gun' exactly, just as in actual practice it was hard to spot a well-concealed pillbox or emplacement. At the end of such a maneuver the sergeant would appear and tell his impressions of the attack, particularly criticizing the way in which men and officers had or had not taken cover and pointing out all who had exposed themselves most recklessly to his fire.

When the forenoon was devoted to a maneuver of that sort or to a lecture and demonstration or the assembly and operation of auto-rifles or grenades, the afternoon would be given over to work on another line of trenches in the woods, behind the crossroads, about four hundred yards to the rear of the front of our second-line position. Here we staked out the new trenches in accordance with a plan of the finished position with which we were furnished. After the line was staked out, it had to be cleared of the small trees that covered it. Then six inches of soil were removed, double rows of large stakes driven along both sides of this narrow trench, and the weaving of the raised revetting begun. Some men cut the brush which formed the basket-work, some trimmed it and some wove. As each section of revetting was completed, other men filled it with earth shoveled from outside the trench to the front and rear. This procedure provided a dry moat, which in the wet season would not be so dry after all.

Care had to be taken to clear the ground in front of the trenches so that the field of fire might be uninterrupted and yet so that there might be enough trees left standing to furnish a screen of foliage against ob-

servation from the air. The outfit that had preceded us in the sector had provided an ingenious supplement to the barbed wire, which was already in place, in the form of a network of alder and small trees bent over every which way in great bows and wired down.

Once we conducted a lesson in throwing live grenades to the considerable injury of the weak revetting of the old trenches against which the fragments were hurled. Once we conducted a night occupation of the trenches. This operation was a regimental affair. It was assumed that the alarm had been given that the enemy had broken through the front line and were advancing on our position. At nine-thirty the signal was given. The men rushed from the barracks fully armed and equipped, formed in single column with the platoon commanders at the head of each platoon and a sergeant at the rear, and moved to their assigned sections of trench.

My section consisted of a front of about three hundred yards, one hundred of which was outlined trench. I took for my P.C. a small bastion in the left section of trench, saw to the placing of the auto-rifles and the men at the salient points, and then returned a runner to the company commander's post to report all in position. Later I was pleased to learn that we were the first platoon to report. After we had been in place but a few minutes and my visiting patrol was just gone on its way to the next platoon to our left, a detachment of engineers arrived from the rear to close the gap in the wire where the narrow-gauge railroad went through. I showed them the position of the stacked-up *chevaux-de-frise* and coils of wire and, at my direction, they actually closed the gap. The railroad was not used and we left it closed.

For the sake of giving the maneuver added reality I reported by runner at nine-forty-five that the enemy had arrived. We kept well in touch with the company P.C. and at ten came the word that the maneuver was over. It had been wholly a game, a game which I felt might seem childish and unnecessary to some of the veterans who had seen far more service than I, but every one had entered fully into the spirit of it. All were serious. All obeyed promptly. I acquired increased confidence in my ability to meet with problems as they came up; a confidence that was greatly needed since I was not yet wholly broken to the idea that I had arrived at 'officer's estate.' Although it had not been rehearsed, the whole operation went off with singular smoothness.

The only thing that annoyed me was the persistent manner in which two of my runners saluted whenever I spoke. They were most punctilious, but I felt that the amenity was out of place in a narrow, dark trench during the simulated conditions of an attack.

One of the men who behaved in this punctilious manner was Private Kline, a quiet and serious fellow, who, I understand, had been broken from a sergeant just before I joined the company. He was of great service during the Champagne attack later in the season.

My sergeants were named respectively Bohon, Beaudry, and Yakely. Bohon, an old Regular Army man, was platoon sergeant. He was extremely helpful to me because, although always exact in every detail of military etiquette, he did not give the impression of trying to tell me that my place was above him as did some of the regulars. He was helpful in the extreme — and I needed many tips; he told me all that

I wanted to know and volunteered much about the men in an easy fashion that saved me the wear and tear of asking many questions.

Beaudry was a sleepy young fellow. He was too obsessed with the idea that it was a sergeant's duty to tell others what to do, but to do very little himself. When I joined the outfit, Yakely was a corporal without a squad. Though no older than Beaudry, he was more responsible and I soon made him a sergeant.

The corporals were, from the first to the seventh squad respectively: Jodlowski; Lichodziewski, a humorously intense and blasphemous person with a real genius for bossing, but an unfortunate tendency to get drunk which caused me to break him and make Gill a corporal in his place; Scopolitis, of Boston; Kretchik; Levan; Crash; and Cobb.

Some of the privates of whose names I have record were Bogdan, S. Jones, Bill Jones, Logan, Salesi, Hennetko, Hennenhafer, Nussdorfer, Seppannen, Panteno, Gras, Pollina, Powers, and Elisha Smith. Every part of the country was represented, but Texas, Kansas, Montana, and Wisconsin had contributed perhaps more heavily than the other States.

In 'B' Company of the 308th I could recognize every man in my platoon by the appearance and shape of the back of his neck, whether or not I knew him by his face. This was because I marched behind them constantly, passed behind them in the trenches, and saw them from behind far more often than I did from before. I came to regard it as a test of acquaintanceship whether or not I could name a man when I saw the back of his neck. Therefore, when I began to be able to identify the men in my new platoon by the tips of their ears and the small expanse of neck that appeared

below their steel helmets, I felt that my education was well advanced. But that stage of my education was not to be completed. I wish that I had got to know the men better, but I unwarily allowed myself to be sent on detached duty. It was a mistake. I not only lost the chance to get to know the platoon well, but I missed the big doings of September 12th.

Word came of a school for infantry officers and non-coms at some unnamed place in the area of the S.O.S. Each company was required to send two officers and a detachment of non-coms. Company Commander Wade selected Elmore as a delegate and wavered about his second choice to the extent of asking whether any of the rest of us — Thompson, who had but recently joined us, Rausch, who had just been given a first lieutenancy, and myself — would like to go. Momentarily forgetting my preference for service with troops and thinking that I might acquire some information that would make me a more competent leader, I volunteered. But the assignment to the School did not take effect at once.

On Saturday, August 17th, twelve days after we had arrived in the lines, we received orders that we should be relieved at once. At sundown all packs were made and the kitchens were loaded and sent on ahead. At nine o'clock a detachment of replacements arrived much worn with having marched up twenty-five kilometers from Nancy during the day. They were divided among the platoons. Sergeant Bohon took our group and assigned them to squads. The wait was resumed. At nine-thirty I laid aside my belt and gas mask and lay down to snooze. The barracks were dark and every one rested, but not well, for coats and blankets were packed and the night air was cold.

At twelve-fifteen we were ordered to form to march. The column was assembled in the woods at the side of the road. With Bohon I entered the barracks to make sure that nothing had been left behind. Nothing had, except a gas mask which bore the name of Gill, who was on trial as a corporal. I stepped up to where the men of the platoon were sitting.

'Gill,' I called, 'have all your men their masks at the alert?'

'Yes, sir!' came his voice from the dark.

'How's your own?'

'At the alert, sir.'

'Is it?'

'Yes.'

'Feel and see.'

There was a pause. It would require a really respectable interval of time to find any item of his equipment, so varied were the things carried.

'I — I — I — haven't it, sir. I'll have to look in the barracks,' Gill faltered, finally, stepping out of the column.

'I have it, here. That's a fine example for a corporal to set!'

I apologize to Gill for showing him up so badly even if it was dark. It is bad practice to bawl out a non-com before his men, but the lesson that time was too good to miss; we had to be very insistent about the proper use of the gas mask.

One of the new replacements did not answer to the roll call. He could not be found. Later, when we were back at Nancy, we discovered that he awoke just at the moment the relieving troops arrived, and being entirely unfamiliar with the new company that he had just joined, attached himself to them and did not

realize that we were hunting for him. On the acquaintance of a few hours, wholly in the dark, none of us knew him well enough to identify him in the feeble light of a single waning torch.

Finally at about one o'clock, when we were nearly maddened by the wait, the column got under way. We swung off onto the main road, ordinarily peaceful and deserted during the day, and found it as crowded as any city street. Half was a solid mass of marching men. The other half was equally solid with moving trucks, wagons, limbers, and guns rumbling and rattling by in deafening procession. The woods at either side seemed full of men waiting to join the column. We passed battery after battery in position. The teeming darkness was profoundly full of movement. In the sky flickered the white light of a distant bombardment, and, as we reached the bank of the Moselle and turned to follow it to the rear, the roar of the guns increased and the firing spread rapidly along the line to the north and south.

On and on we hiked through silent villages where nothing could be seen but the outlines of the roofs and the sparkle of the glass insulators on the telephone poles. By the time we had reached Autreville the sun was up. The company became visible, marching raggedly. The replacements were, with good reason, nearly exhausted, for they had rested hardly at all during the preceding twenty-four hours. At Custines we crossed the river on a fine old stone-arched bridge. At Champigneulles we could hardly get under way after the ten-minute halt which mercifully broke up every hour. Just as we approached Maxeville an ambulance passed us. One man from a platoon ahead fell out at the sight and the kind-hearted medical

officer took him aboard. That was a mistake. Instantly there was an epidemic of falling out. Nothing but the complete crowding of the ambulance caused its cessation.

We halted at Malzeville and camped on the grass-covered towpath beside the canal. By noon I was so rested and restless, though three hours before my exhaustion had seemed complete, that I obtained permission to leave the company, boarded an electric street car, and went into Nancy to dinner at the Popote des Alliés. There I met Captain McBride, my friend of the former visits. I also met the battalion adjutant, who told me that officers were supposed to remain with their commands, but as my permission was authentic and he was there himself, I did not hurry away.

When I did get back I found that the travel orders for the Specialists' School had come. Elmore and I gathered in our luggage from the supply wagon, found a place on a wagon going into town, and made at once for the railway station. We were ordered to report to Andilly. The station agent could sell us tickets to two Andillys. We selected the most distant, at a guess, bought a ticket, and went out to find a hotel. Three hours later, Elmore was suddenly overcome by the thought that he had left his trench coat in the station. Of course we thought it lost. Discussing all possible plans for recovering it, we hurried to the station. We asked M.P.'s and French officials where we might look for it. No one could help us. At last, we went to the ticket window to inquire of the station-master whether the coat had been turned in. There was the coat on the sill just where Elmore had left it when buying his ticket! Perhaps a thousand people had passed by that

U.S. Official Drawing

TROOPS RESTING AFTER A LONG MARCH

Note the stack of rifles in front of the barn door and the stovepipe through the transom over the door of the billet

one window in the time it had been there — and yet it remained! We had hardly recovered from our astonishment even at four-thirty the next morning when the train came and we set out for the most distant Andilly — Andilly near Langres, Haute-Marne.

CHAPTER XIII

A.I.S.S.

'THE School was supposed to begin to-day,' said the adjutant of the Army Infantry Specialists' School at Fort Plesnoy, when we reported to him late Sunday afternoon. 'Of course we didn't send trucks down to meet that train. No one'll get here to-day. You fellows should have gone to Paris for the week-end. That's what travel orders are for.'

We realized that we should have, at least if our so doing would have insured our getting transportation from the station to the fort. We had arrived when ordered, not when expected, and the uphill walk had been a hot one. The only encouragement we got was the information that our baggage would be brought up the next day and that we were at liberty to take our pick of the bunks in the bunk-room.

But the trip had been worth while even though it had not included Paris. My fifth visit to Toul was not as short as the preceding four, even though it lasted no longer than was necessary for us to shift our baggage from one train to the other — a task which the railway officials showed no intention of performing, although the destination labels called for the change.

West we went and then south, crossing and recrossing the Meuse. An hour beyond Toul, just as the shadows of early morning shortened and the dew jewels dissolved from the grass, the spire of the church at Domremy-la-Pucelle became visible far to the right above the poplars that lined the highway along the valley of the Meuse. 'C'est Domremy,' went a whisper

through the compartment — 'Jeanne d'Arc.' The words were enough. It was the birthplace of Joan of Arc. We stared and, as if to help us, the train slowed down.

Beyond Domremy the pointed towers and great façade of a white stone château shining out against a green forest slope held our attention for several kilometers. Next we became absorbed in watching a race between an American quad truck and the train. The streets of Neufchâteau seemed lifeless, but the railway yards were alive with Americans. As long as it was in sight Bourmont held our attention, for it was the first city on a hill that we had seen in France. We were unanimous on that point. Step by step the gray red-roofed houses backed by masses of trees climbed the hill beside the empty cobbled road down which at any moment — so mediæval, so silently expectant did it look — might have come riding a cavalcade of knights with lances erect and pennons flying. Along other less open streets the houses converged on every side toward the summit where towered the massive walls and spire of a church.

So the scene changed, and finally, at about two o'clock, we came to Celles, eight kilometers from Langres, Haute-Marne. It was the railroad station nearest to the Andilly named on our tickets and in our orders.

Fort Plesnoy, built in 1876 not far from the point of the farthest Prussian advance of 1870, was on a hill, just as my imagination requires every fort to be. It was properly reached by a drawbridge across a moat on the dry bottom of which the grass grew thickly enough to break the fall of the drunken midnight arrival who made for the lights the shortest way, and sheer-walled enough to imprison that arrival for an all-

night walk. It was square with bastioned corners. From the bottom of the moat to the top of the rampart was the height of a three-story building.

In the wall at the right and left of the main gateway and on a level with it were the offices; below them was the infirmary; below that the echoing galleries that connected with the bastions. Inside the gate was a stone-paved courtyard on the far side of which were a number of small rooms, the property of the instructors at the School. At the right of the gate an incline led up from the court to the *terre-plein*, from which the grass-covered rampart was easily accessible. On the left a tunnel opened through, past the entrance of another tunnel, to a grassy inner parade that extended around two sides. The second tunnel admitted to the inner hall to which the sunlight never penetrated and which was used as a mess-hall by the officer students. On either side of this hall, but separated from it, were open courts that lighted the deeply buried bunk-rooms and class-rooms.

Stone formed the floors, walls, and ceiling of the bunk-room. The bunks were double-deckers; the uprights of pipe, the bed space of wood. I chose a lower one — the big drops of moisture that condensed on the ceiling could not fall on it.

On Monday the crowds began to arrive. On Tuesday the work began. As I had already lectured to my own platoon on the subject of grenades and given a demonstration to them with live *citrons* and O.F.'s, I was well aware of how little I actually knew of the subject. I elected the course in grenades.

It was a good course, thorough in the extreme. After the first day of throwing dummies with the approved straight-arm motion intended to keep one from tiring,

my arm stiffened so that for several days I could have thrown in no other way.

We threw dummies by the numbers; we threw them at a mark; we threw them for distance; we threw them for speed. Then we listened to lectures on their 'innards'; saw drawing after drawing of their fuse arrangements; read pamphlets on the explosives used in them; handled models; fingered samples of T.N.T.; studied about the historic types, the Hale rifle grenade, and all the rest. When the class-room material gave out, we were hurried to the grenade storehouse near the incinerator, and given bags of live ones which we carried carefully to the model trench system way below the fort and pitched over the parapet.

We fired individual samples of the incendiary grenades that scatter the interior of a dugout with burning phosphorus; we set down grenade smoke screens; we fired rockets and Véry flares of all colors. From the rifle *tromblons* — blued-steel devices the shape of a bottle without a bottom that fitted by the neck over the muzzle of a rifle — we fired illuminating projectiles that drifted slowly to earth on miniature parachutes. As each parachute fell, there would be a wild rush of students to recover it. They were fine souvenirs; some sold for as high as a dollar.

We pulled the pins of the Mark I's and O.F.'s; we 'hit the nail on the head' with the *citrons;* we pulled the strings of the captured German potato-mashers; we fixed *tromblons* again and fired the V.B. grenades; and all the while we prayed that we might get through the course with our lives.

One of my mates, a Marine named Treveillian, came close to not doing so. Toward the end of the second and final week of the course, we were called to

'put on' a demonstration of a trench raid for the benefit of a gallery of majors and colonels from the Staff School at Langres. The gallery assembled on the road that ran across the hill slope above the model trench system. A platoon of French *chasseurs* preceded us with a demonstration of a raid with flame-throwers. The ground of the trenches was still smoking from the flame when the two grenade squads opened from the woods at the bottom of the slope with several volleys of rifle grenades. The heavy little steel cylinders went out of the *tromblons* beautifully with the customary 'schoop,' curved upward, turning over and over all the while and fell at just the right angle, bursting above the trench in a flat, spreading cloud of white smoke and showering the ground with fragments. Then we fixed bayonets and debouched, each man rushing forward a few yards and hurling himself to the ground to lie in wait until the line should form at his new position.

I was 'point' in my squad. That is, I was the man who, when we had entered the trench, should lead off, advancing bayonet first round each corner to stick any hostile sandbag dummy who might have escaped death by the grenades tossed by my mates from behind over my head and over the traverse in front. In the previous exercises with dummy grenades the fellows had always tossed far enough, but I was worried for fear that in the excitement and with the live grenades one of the tosses might be too short. But I never got a chance to 'point.'

We reached the shell holes just outside the trench and rose on our elbows to toss a final volley of O.F.'s in upon the defenders. There came a lone explosion, then the explosion of the volley. The lone explosion was wrong. Who was hit? There were great bloody

spots on Elmore's suddenly blanched face; Turner's face and arms were spotted and his uniform was riddled; McKay was doused with blood. Treveillian was down. The uninjured rushed to the others and the mock battle was forgotten.

Treveillian was grabbing his right wrist with his left hand so powerfully that the blood could hardly flow, but his right hand was gone, all but a fragment of the thumb. As he had drawn it back to throw the O.F. the thing had exploded prematurely. It was his blood that spattered Elmore and McKay. Elmore was unhurt, McKay had six small bits of the grenade in his body, Turner had fifty-five. The fifty-five were easily removed and McKay got a new uniform and was about again in two days. Trev stood the pain and shock wonderfully. 'What luck,' he said as they pushed his stretcher into the ambulance, 'to get through Belleau and Soissons and then to lose my hand *playing* at school.' It's lucky the instructors didn't hear the disgust he put into that word; they couldn't have gone on if they had.

Examinations were held at the end of the second week. At the beginning of the third week I started work in the course on automatic weapons. First came the Chauchat automatic rifle, a French weapon of which each infantry platoon theoretically carried three or four. We students worked with diagrams of the moving parts, listened to lectures, handled large working models of the trigger mechanism, learned long lists of nomenclature, and at last got to work with the weapon itself. We took down and assembled the guns countless times; we turned away while the instructors 'fixed' them so that they would not work and then resumed work by trying to diagnose the trouble. We

fired and worked with the new American Browning automatic, a weapon as much superior to the Chauchat as the rifle is to the bow. As I lay behind one and directed its stream of bullets by sight, just as I would have directed the stream of water from a hose, I felt a strange elation, a sense of invincible power. Who says it isn't fun to fire a gun! — if the target is made of sandbags.

One class-room period was lightened by an amusing apparition. Its herald, a lieutenant of the ordnance department, entered first, whispered to the instructor a moment, and began: 'There's an armorers' school near here, gentlemen. We're studying mediæval armor, captured German armor, and the little armor that the French have produced. We're taking the best of everything that we learn and making our own models. I'd just like to show you a sample of what we're doing. — Come on, sergeant.'

In stalked a man, his head, body, and arms enveloped in olive-drab armor. From the eyes — the only openings in the pointed face of his helmet — came spurts of smoke. Though he swung his arms and turned from side to side, his progress was noiseless. He halted, bowed, and lifted off the helmet without taking his pipe from his mouth. The herald took the helmet, unbuckled the body armor, and showed how it was made noiseless. Wherever it touched the body were pads of sponge rubber; small pads and straps articulated the joints; a leather vest forbade any possibility of chafing.

Not only the armorers, but all the special arms, were anxious to show us what they were doing and could do. The School gas officer lectured on the newest German gases and their counters and told us of the newest

masks. He tested all our own by sending us, a squad at a time, into the gas chamber filled with tear gas. He ordered us to sniff the stuff that we might recognize it. He showed us samples of gas shells; he imitated the sound of their flight; he described the types of gas alarms. The chief instructor in the course on the 37-millimeter gun — often called the one-pound cannon — lectured to us on his weapon. His range demonstration was an even better recommendation for the gun. Each of us fired three shots at a target on a hill crest nearly a mile away. The gun was beautifully easy to sight and fire; a tremendous feeling of satisfaction came from seeing each shell go to the mark and explode with all the damaging effectiveness of a grenade. The Stokes mortar was demonstrated.

A British drill sergeant, adept in the art of calling a group of men such names as would inflame each one with genuine, violent rage, put us through a morning's work in bayonet fighting; told where to kick the Boches; just how to hit them to break their skulls most thoroughly; how to turn the bayonet in the wound to render it most damaging; and cautioned us not to thrust between the ribs, where the bayonet might be caught, lest a second opponent should get us before we could pull it out. The intelligence officer described the work of the battalion scouts and the process of printing and issuing maps. A French officer detailed the planning of a raid and, giving us the plan of a position, the force of the enemy, and the object to be gained, told us to write complete orders for a raid of our own. A camouflage expert described the process of concealing guns with chicken wire and burlap, the making of dummy trees, and the remodeling of a shell hole into a sniper's post. It was all valuable.

A very well-known man from Chicago, one of a number of leaders of industry who had come from the States to cheer up 'our boys' by telling them what the 'loved ones at home' were doing to back them up, appeared one day and we were paraded to hear him. An over-eager little man abounding in good intentions, and who was not graced by his uniform, he caused a laugh when he climbed upon the drillmaster's platform. But he 'rallied round' himself and began with a long description of the port at Saint-Nazaire. Next he told of the work at a camouflage factory.

Then he began on the saddest tale. 'Do you know, men' — error number one: it's wrong to address a group of officers as 'men.' 'Do you know you're a part of the greatest army the world has ever seen?' Yes, we knew it. Fully ninety per cent of the audience had seen fighting, many of them at Belleau, Château-Thierry, and Soissons. All of us regarded ourselves as superior to the instructors because we had seen fighting and they had not. But he went on. 'Our boys' — that was us. He seemed over-familiar. 'Our boys have shown the world that they are daring fighters.' We would admit it, but what did he know about it? 'Think how they pushed back the Hun! Think too of the great work of the Service of Supplies!' Somebody quoted in a stage whisper, 'Mother, take down your service flag, your boy's in the S.O.S.' 'Think of the hardships endured by these men in the S.O.S.! Why' — he was dramatic; his voice nearly broke — 'only yesterday while I was talking with my chauffeur, he told me how he had been obliged to sleep six nights in succession in a motor truck with only one blanket!!'

A wild yell of derision broke from the entire assembly. It rose and fell, burst upon burst of laughter for

fully five minutes. The leader of industry sat weakly down, his eyes popping, his face pale.

Finally he managed to stammer out a question, 'Wh-wh-why, I-I-I think that's hard. What's w-w-wrong?'

'We slept in the mud for twenty days!' yelled a big Marine.

'H-h-h-ave you been to the front?' asked the speaker, even more weakly.

'Yes, all of us!'

The commanding officer turned to the speaker and whispered a few words. The formation was dismissed at once. The speaker was not seen again. I wonder whether he stayed to lunch.

I visited the city of Langres on two occasions: once with Parsons, who was taking the intelligence course at the School; once with Elmore. From the top of the broad wall that surrounded its hilltop site one could see for fifty kilometers in three directions; and in the fourth, look down upon the narrow, many-angled ways between overhanging buildings all overshadowed by the roof and massive towers of the cathedral.

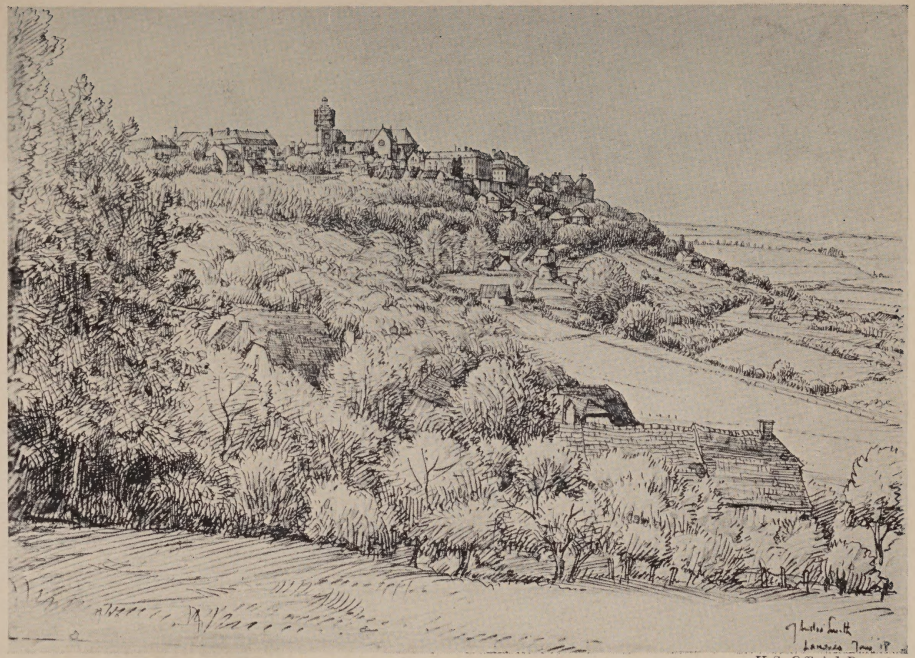
The streets swarmed with majors and colonels from the Staff School. All had to be saluted. The interstices between the majors and colonels were filled with enlisted men — students at the Army Candidates' School where lieutenancies were the prizes. These all saluted without provocation. The amount of shopping I could do was limited to what I could carry in my left hand. I bought a musette bag. I needed one, anyway, but I had to have one there. My right arm stiffened from too much use — saluting.

On my first visit I sought shelter in the Y.M.C.A., where some honest-to-goodness American ladies in

civilian dresses — a unique sight — were entertaining at tea. On my second visit I tried to look up the first sergeant of Company 'B' of the 308th who I surmised might be at the A.C.S. I failed to find him in his barracks, but met him by accident on the main street. We sat for an hour in the park chatting about the company. It had been in action: Kinkel and Jones killed, Rossner mustard-gassed, Lieutenant Miles made a captain.

A little before train time on that visit, Elmore and I went down to the railway station by means of the clashing car and snail-like single train of the Chemin de Fer à Crémaillère — the cog railway. We could not get into the station to buy a ticket. The M.P.'s forbade it. The A.P.M. had ordered that no one not supplied with travel orders might ride on the train, no, not even for the seven kilometers back to Celles. Literally hundreds of officers, all supplied with perfectly good passes away from the fort, swarmed about the station. No amount of arguing gained anything. Attempts to get to the train from the other side of the yard were foiled. Only one student of the A.I.S.S. boarded the train. He did it by dropping from the bridge onto the roof after the train had started and the cars had all been searched.

A telephone call to the fort brought the information that the adjutant didn't care a snap about us, that he wouldn't send trucks for us, that we might walk if we wished. A few of the angry fellows went back to the city vowing that they never would return to the fort; the rest realized that there were no beds in the city and started to walk. Before the group in which I was had reached the bridge over the railway a big truck came up. We blocked its passage and asked the driver for a ride. He was on duty; going to report to carry a load,



U.S. Official Drawing

LANGRES

but he couldn't resist the combined urging of twenty lieutenants. He made the trip at such speed that we couldn't see out between cracks in the wall of poplars along the road and he earned a big purse for his kindness.

Parsons and I put in many evenings exploring the fort and its neighborhood. We visited Neuilly l'Évêque and found nothing of interest. Plesnoy, just under the hill, was a *petite* place, unspoiled, sleepy, without even a café. We bought an eighteen-egg omelet. Parsons ordered blackberry brandy because he thought it uniquely French — and it proved to have been made in America. Celles provided other omelets. The hillside to the south of the fort was interesting. I tried to climb it, but failed. Even the dog that was with me couldn't make it. The tangle of barbed wire, blackberry vines, and osiers — all planted for a purpose — was too thick. The meadow to the west was purple with wild crocuses and between the plants was an interminable subway system dug by the omnipresent moles.

Reading matter was scarce at the fort. I exhausted the textbooks; read all the magazines — one 'Saturday Post,' one 'American,' one 'National Geographic,' two 'Atlantics,' one 'Yale Review,' and one 'Argosy' — from cover to cover; missed not a word in 'The Iron Stair' and 'Salt and Savour,' two English novels that I had bought at Langres, and, as there was nothing but poetry left on the one shelf of the fort library, read Goldsmith's 'Deserted Village' and 'The Traveller' with much care.

A group of traveling vaudeville actors in Y.M.C.A. uniforms put on a number of acts one evening. A few evenings later their performance was eclipsed by an

exhibition of fort talent in which the instructors as stars were nobly supported by the more talented of the students.

Writing letters provided some entertainment. Eating provided more. The great inner hall echoed strangely with the shouts of the diners. The roof nearly fell when the united Marines sang their hymn or joined in the six verses of the song:

There were three men from Jerryco.
There were three men from Jerryco.
Jerry, Jerry
Co — Co — Co.
Jerry, Jerry
Co — Co — Co.
There were three men from Jerryco.

The first one's name was A-bra-ham.
The first one's name was A-bra-ham.
Abra — Abra
Ham — Ham — Ham —

And so forth to an eminently improper ending.

Often evenings, when all was quiet, when half the bunks were occupied by men each studying by the light of his own candle, when the corridor inside the wall was filled with silent circles of crap enthusiasts, the Marines would 'put on' another show. One would hurl open the door and shout in a stentorian voice, 'All out, Marines!' It took but one such shout. Instantly the court would fill with Marines milling back and forth, pushing, shouting jests, and calling in unison, 'Marines!' Then they would sing their hymn once through and disperse.

Waiting in line to buy American chocolates at the canteen on Tuesdays and Fridays was not bad sport, provided the candy did not give out before the line did.

Washing clothes was a task rather than a form of amusement. Bathing was good sport once one had finished the preliminaries of borrowing two pails, carrying the water from a tank half a kilometer down the road, getting an assistant to pour the water over him, finding a secluded spot behind the rampart, and stripping and soaping up. There were no mosquitoes in France — at least so said the legend of the A.E.F.

Toward the last of our stay one of the most interesting sports was to stand at the railway station watching the trains go by. When I had landed in France, Americans were still something of a curiosity; when I traveled from Nancy to Celles, the American uniform was to be seen in every town. That was a sight worth seeing. Now without exception the trains were half or more than half made up of cars labeled 'Armée Américaine,' 'Munitions de Guerre,' 'Ravitaillement du Armée,' or 'U.S.Q.M.C.' Troop trains, trains loaded with field artillery pieces, railway naval guns, and hospital trains passed in large numbers, all going one way. America was on the spot indeed!

And soon the purpose of it all was rumored about. A big drive was in preparation. 'Where?' every one asked every one else. 'Is my outfit in it?' — 'Oh, hell, think what we're missing!'

We were missing the big show, and to divert our minds the School authorities put on a mimic big show — a grand finale in which all the courses took part. The night before the show the Stokes mortar crew laid down a barrage of six hundred shells that rocked the fort and tore the four-acre hayfield beyond the trench system to absolute tatters.

Zero hour came at one o'clock in the afternoon. Moving in squad columns on a front of half a mile, the

infantry climbed the hill to the north of the fort. Then followed a long wait while patrols 'established contact' with an imaginary enemy in the woods. That enemy did not resist. We deployed, wave upon wave of men, each man ten yards from his neighbor on the right and left, and ploughed on. A crew trundled up a one-pound cannon and located it in a thicket behind me at one of the halts. Suddenly they started firing. The four of us nearest jumped at the clap. The aim was so low that we had to crawl away to avoid being hit.

We crawled to the edge of the road where, half a mile away in the valley bottom, we could see the flags that marked the new line of the enemy. The command to fire was given. Two thousand men opened almost simultaneously with loaded ammunition, utterly drowning out the sound of the several one-pounders. The Chauchats rattled out their bullets faster than they were ever called to do in action. A Stokes mortar was set up on the edge of the road just below us. Off went a phosphorus shell. It burst fully three hundred feet in air over the hostile position scattering a cone of destruction more frightful than that of any shell — frightful because so visible, so unescapable. Straight as so many arrows hundreds of balls of fire swept to the ground; behind each unrolled a white trail that hung motionless long after the balls had struck and begun their incendiary work. Then the gun crew changed to explosive shells.

A strange sight it was to see the firing. A Stokes mortar is simply a steel tube, about five inches in diameter, closed at one end. The open end is raised from the ground by an adjustable bi-pod. The angle of elevation determines the distance the shell shall carry. The closed end is fixed to a base-plate that is

buried in the ground. The shells are steel cylinders of the diameter of the bore of the tube and about twelve inches long. From each end projects a smaller cylinder. One contains the fuse that may be adjusted so that the shell shall burst in air over the target or upon impact. The other contains the firing charge. Rings of explosive can be slipped over this projection. Each ring increases the range by a determined distance. The fuse is set, the gunner takes the shell from an assistant and drops it into the nozzle of the piece. As it strikes on the bottom of the tube the firing charge is exploded and with a 'scroop' of outrushing air and followed by a tongue of flame the shell travels off, visible all the way. At first it flies evenly; just before it reaches the top of its trajectory it starts to turn end over end. As it nears the ground it turns faster and faster. And then — well, one of the shells exploded over the trees six hundred yards away from us; the smoke had nearly cleared away and two more shells were in the air — one going up, one coming down — when the whine of an approaching fragment was heard. No one could dodge; the sound filled the air. A twelve-inch piece of steel — frayed, jagged, deadly — landed at the feet of the spectators not thirty feet from the gun.

Altogether eighty thousand rounds of loaded ammunition went up in noise. The targets were wrecked. Not a leaf in their vicinity remained unpunctured. Most surprising of all, no one was hurt.

By six o'clock the 'battle' was over. The firing died away.

The next morning came the news, told in the Paris editions of the 'New York Herald' and 'Chicago Tribune,' that the big push had started. It was at the Saint-Mihiel salient. Only the question, 'Is my outfit

in it?' remained unanswered. Each man knew to his disgust that his outfit *must* be.

Friday the 13th was a day of great news. The official *communique* announcing the fall of the Saint-Mihiel salient was read to the School at a special formation. The cheering, jumping, and back-pounding that eclipsed anything of that sort ever seen at a football game lasted for five minutes. At a second formation, later in the day, the number of prisoners taken was announced. The cheering wasn't so loud that time. We had begun to fear that the casualty lists would make dismal reading.

On Saturday the station was crowded. The School was there to watch for the hospital trains — coming back. They came, but they brought good news. Few men had been killed. There were relatively few fearful injuries. The *blessés* were depressed, for the fighting had been easy, the casualties not numerous. Question number two was answered.

That day the School ended. Not a train was scheduled to run to Toul until eleven-thirty Sunday morning. Not a train did run to Toul until five-thirty Sunday afternoon.

CHAPTER XIV

WOODS AND TOWNS BETWEEN SCRAPS

ONE hundred kilometers in eight hours was good speed for a passenger train moving toward the front. Everything else on the road had the right of way over passenger trains. Twelve hours looked like a long delay in such a city as Toul, where there was nothing to do but eat and bathe.

But twelve hours will pass. Elmore and I went to the station an hour before our train was to leave. It had been there but five minutes and yet was so crowded that we could not get aboard. As each of us was carrying a clothing roll, we had to give up any thought of riding on the steps or bumpers. The car roofs were sloped too steeply to accommodate us. We could not get aboard. Fourteen hours are not nearly as long as twelve when one can sleep through them as we did through the fourteen before the next train.

When we finally did get aboard at seven the next morning, our troubles had only begun. We were headed for the Second Division, but it could be only by chance that we might strike upon it. In fact, it was only on the chance that one M.P. was right that we took the train at all. At each station nearly every passenger opened his window and called out to whomever he might see on the platform for information. At Manoncourt the medical officers on the platform told us to get off for the Second. We did, having completed in an hour a rail trip that we had waited twenty-six hours to make.

'Wait awhile,' said the medicos, 'a truck may come

along. It's only six kilos over to Ansauville, where the 23d's located.' They must have wanted some one to talk to. We asked about the drive. The medicos looked on it as a failure. The troops had taken every objective and more, but there had not been enough wounded. Their field hospital had not received a single patient. There were lots of other hospitals in a similar unfortunate plight. — Well, probably it was disappointing not to be able to be useful after all.

Far away to the east, all this while, moved a stream of great brown trucks, each perfectly spaced from the one ahead and behind, each raising identical waves of dust. We had watched it for an hour from the train. We watched it for half an hour more. But no truck came near us.

After listening for some time to the plaints of the doctors, we picked up our baggage and set out down the road past the big ammunition dump — a field where tens of thousands of shells lay in piles of a hundred each, like so many logs, each pile covered with green camouflage cloth. After we had passed a spot where it was all too evident that a Boche bomb had landed among the shells, and had gone through Royaumeix, a town that looked uninteresting because it seemed to offer no chances for a meal, our luck began to pick up. Some regimental adjutant with a touring car full of lieutenants came by and offered us a ride. I took the left running board. Everything went well and the car went at fifty per hour for the next two minutes. Then my luck took a momentary turn. The driver made for a small gap between two trucks going in opposite directions. I flattened against the car, but even then I sponged off most of the soft mud from the side of one truck, and the butt of my automatic, pro-

jecting from my hip, gouged out a long sliver of paint. Two minutes more at the same speed and we were 'home.'

'The 23d's over in the woods there,' said the adjutant, 'you'll find 'em.' It was easy. The first man I saw saluted. 'Let me take your bag, sir,' he said. 'I'm glad to see you back.' I shook hands. It certainly was good to see one of the fellows from my own platoon again. It certainly was good to have some one say he was glad to see me back, better than any number of salutes no matter how snappy.

Sure enough. The company was in the woods — and in the mud, too. Shelter tents were pitched all about in the water-soaked underbrush without order or method. Every one was wet, had been wet since the beginning of the drive from which they had been relieved during the night that I had spent on the train. Battalion and company headquarters were located in a tar-paper shack that was but little drier than the out-of-doors. The kitchens, wagons, and mules were sheltered in wall-less sheds. The officers of the battalion headquarters had found space in one end of a wooden structure that was largely filled with boxes of small-arms ammunition.

I found Rausch and Given, two of 'I' Company's lieutenants whom I did know, together in a shelter tent. Wade was drying out by the fire in the headquarters shack. He observed that we were back, that my platoon was now commanded by Lieutenant Gerow, a new-comer, and Elmore's by Lieutenant Hinn, another newcomer, that there was nothing for us to do, and that we had better report at regimental headquarters. It was all a matter of business.

Bohon, my old platoon sergeant, was not far away.

From him I learned that the platoon had suffered but two casualties. The barber was missing. Bohon had had the tip of his nose scratched by a bullet. My friend Cobb had been sent to an officers' training school.

We reported to regimental headquarters, as Wade ordered, and were reassigned to Company 'I.' There had been so few casualties that there were no vacancies in other companies.

There was a little space left in the storehouse. Elmore and I squeezed into it. I 'salvaged' a duckboard from the pistol range that I had already discovered in the woods just beyond the kitchen, and reserved it as my bed and chair. There was nothing to do but sleep and listen to stories of the drive.

Gerow, my successor with the second platoon, had, I learned, served for some years with the Canadians until disabled. Then, on America's entering the war, he had obtained a commission and was now a genuine veteran in our army. Certainly he was the most sophisticated 'gentleman by act of Congress' I had met up to that time and he knew and approved French ways from A to Z. Hinn, I saw but little of. Rumor had it that he was even more recently commissioned than I.

The next day the mail came. Fifty-five letters were my share! Fifty-five letters from home! I spent all day reading them and hardly noticed that it was raining.

On Thursday, the effects of the arrival of the mail began to be felt. I wrote seven letters; every one else in the company likewise used up all the paper he could get hold of. The result was that I was no longer a man of leisure, but was 'allowed' to censor some of the mail that no one else cared to bother with. It was no bother to me. I was tired of not working and I had

certainly not censored mail long enough to find the business a bore. Before noon the next day I had become very familiar with the standard form of the letters: 'We have just been in a big drive. We drove the Boches many miles. It sure was hell, but we got the Boches on the run. General Sherman was right. I am well. There is lots of mud here.' — And so on. Only two letters were at all different. One was so obscene it had to be censored; the other, which was by Sergeant Morgan, was a bit of literature. I looked up Straight and Company 'I' of the 9th, some two kilometers away, and found out more about Saint-Mihiel than any one in my own company had told me. Straight's platoon had been hard hit. Several squads had been annihilated by single shells. Straight could not smile and his eyes looked haunted.

On Friday afternoon the rain stopped and the company had a session with the delousing machine that was brought up on its own great truck. Each man stripped and put on his raincoat, and then wrapped all his clothes, including his extra undersuit, in his blanket, fastened the bundle with his belt, and put his identification tags on it as a marker. The bundles were stowed tightly into the steam chamber, the door closed and fastened just as the door of a great safe might have been, and the steam turned on. After fifteen minutes the bundles were ready for redistribution, but the job was not easy. Some had burst open, some had lost their identifying marks; most simply failed to make connection with their owners at once. My own, which consisted only of blanket and underclothes, was among those that burst. The leather strap from my field-glass case, that was supposed to hold it, had disintegrated. Everything was free from

cooties; everything was covered with steamed-in wrinkles that disappeared only after the clothes had been worn continuously for a week. I was thankful that my own uniform had not had to undergo the ordeal, but equally thankful that the rest of my personal outfit had.

After the delousing was over, a mean order was produced from somewhere above. The company commander was instructed to inspect everything carried by his men and to confiscate all captured German material of whatever sort. In other words, 'they're goin' ter swipe our souvenirs.' The stuff was wanted by the division intelligence officer — so went the excuse; with it he might be able to identify the units that opposed us.

The result of the inspection was not to denude the outfit of souvenirs, for nearly every one kept one, but to accumulate in front of battalion headquarters a huge pile of miscellaneous articles that were either duplicates or had proved too heavy to be carried. A captured Maxim that some one — I think it was the sergeant-major — produced from a corner, crowned the pile that was made up chiefly of field glasses, Luger pistols, sword bayonets, saw bayonets, loaded potato-mashers and disc grenades, great pot-like steel helmets, heavy forehead pieces for sharpshooters' helmets, trench signs, coat sleeves, single boots, blouses, and mess-kits.

Just before mess we were ordered to make packs. Having stored my own stuff aboard the wagon, I circulated about while this was being done. One of the men gave me a German flashlight that proved to be in excellent working order. He had other souvenirs and couldn't get that one into his pocket. I accepted it as a gift, for it was useful — and I had no souvenirs.

At ten o'clock we moved out, headed, according to rumor, for a rest area. At ten-thirty Wade called me to the head of the column and sent me hurrying ahead to catch up with the major who was proceeding slowly on horseback. The major ordered me, with his adjutant and with a representative from each of the other companies, to precede the battalion to Lagney and there make arrangements with the town major for billeting.

We hiked without stop so that we might get a good lead on the battalion; roused the disabled French officer who was serving as town major; told him the strength of our respective companies, and got lists of the houses that we might occupy. Then we hurried back to meet the battalion as it entered town. I found my company quickly and led at once to the first house on the list. My recently acquired souvenir flashlight came in handy; the night's job would have used up a full box of matches if I had not had it.

'Seventeen men here in number 47.' Sergeant Morgan went into 47 with two squads.

'Twenty-five men in this barn.' Another sergeant and three squads went into the barn just next to number 47.

'One squad in number 51.'

'Three squads in number 55.' That meant the two remaining squads of the first platoon and the first of the second. There was some readjustment in the morning. There always was, no matter how careful one might be, for the reason that platoon commanders and platoons both liked to keep their own eight squads together.

'Twenty men here in 57.' The twenty fell out. A sergeant tried the big stable door. It was nailed shut.

Repeated hammering with the butt of a pistol on the door of the house adjoining brought out an old woman who was abusively insistent that we should not enter. We tried prying the door. She stood with her back to the frame threatening us. I summoned the town major. He swore at her in a dignified way. She swore back without dignity, but with utter sincerity. He threatened her. He raised his fist. She jabbered, screamed, and clawed the air. He turned and ordered us to break down the door. We did. A dozen or so blows with a rifle butt on the spot marked by the circle of light from my souvenir gained the twenty their admission.

Each officer was assigned a furnished room, as long as there were furnished rooms to be assigned. That was not long enough. After I had seen every one else inside, Elmore and I were left on the street.

'I couldn't get a place assigned to us,' I told him, 'but a fellow who belongs to an outfit that was in town already has offered me a bed. Let's share it.'

A lieutenant of artillery, hearing our arrival and knowing there were but few officers' billets in town, had earlier in the proceedings stuck his head out of a ground-floor window and offered me his extra bed. Now I was ready to claim it. We stepped in the window to avoid arousing the landlady, but found her in the room. She was hospitality itself and told us to make ourselves at home. We did. We sank into the deep feather mattress as one might sink into a cloud. Our cover was a huge red silk affair, like another mattress filled with feathers.

Before many days the lieutenant of field artillery moved away and Elmore and I took possession in full — a bed apiece. Then, having all the comforts, I re-

solved to follow the example of Elmore and the others who were more used to officering than I was, and to have a striker. A 'striker,' 'dog-robber,' or 'batman,' whichever you pleased to call him, was simply an enlisted man appointed by an officer to look after his effects, shine his shoes, brush his clothes, hunt up laundry women, sweep out the room, and put his roll on the company wagon. In theory a striker worked for the officer only during his spare time, but many officers proved the theory false and many strikers dodged many regular duties. It was more trouble for me to hunt up my striker, who 'struck' also for Lieutenant Hinn, to tell him what to do, and to find where he put my stuff after he did it, than it was for me to wait on myself, so that, if the arrangement had continued for a month, Daly's twenty francs would have been easy money.

Lagney was a good-sized town of two streets and one Salvation Army tent where one could buy raisins and wrist watches, get writing-paper, and dine on fried eggs and hot chocolate. There were two cafés and two shops, but the shops had little or nothing to sell. The fact that guards had to be posted at every vineyard to keep the fellows from souveniring the grapes finally gave the shopkeepers an idea. They decided that Americans like grapes, that they would actually eat them. They picked the grapes, which were small and unattractive in appearance, being grown only for conversion into wine, and sold them.

Lagney took much of the joy out of life for the wine-drinkers. They discovered a group of old men treading out wine in the original way — with their feet.

Lagney afforded me a most pleasant experience. On the afternoon of Sunday, September 22d, I climbed

up through the woods behind the town to inspect the outside of the Fort de Lucey, that, though it was hidden from below, I knew to be a strong modern position. Just under the crest of the hill was a narrow-gauge railway that communicated with seven weather-worn open emplacements of brick. In each emplacement, pushed well forward among the trees, was a heavy gun, mounted on a carriage that fitted the rails. Beside each was a small pile of shells; near by was a handcar that could be pushed back into the ammunition chamber. The crest of the hill was almost completely covered with a mass of barbed wire strung on steel stakes. Away off in the center of this expanse were the steel turrets, all that was visible of the modern fort. At one side was a mound of earth surmounted by a bare flagstaff and several brick barracks buildings. No one was about. I examined everything at will, expecting momentarily to be challenged by a sentry and leaving in the end disappointed at not having experienced that thrill.

When I had finished my day's stint of five letters and was just in the act of stepping out of the front window onto the street — for that was my usual way of exit from the house — I came face to face with a friend from home. Dr. William C. Gordon, who had left my own church to go overseas with the Y.M.C.A. at about the same time that I left Auburndale, had walked out from Toul to see me. At the moment that I stepped out, inquiry had just brought him to my billet.

We talked hard for half an hour about our mutual friends and about what we had heard from home. Then I took him and his friend to the company kitchen and we ate our canned hash and beans from borrowed mess-kits on the tail of the kitchen wagon.

The presence of the two Y.M.C.A. men excited considerable comment that I could not help overhearing. The 'Y' had sent one truck load of tobacco and chocolate to town a few days before, but the whole stock had been sold before Company 'I' had hardly more than begun to stand in line. The Salvation Army stock was depleted. There had been a big demand for a 'Y' canteen, and now rumor got to work. It was only too easy to suppose that these men were looking the place over preparatory to setting up. I tried to quell the rumor, but it spread faster than my whisper, 'They're only visiting.'

Toward sunset Dr. Gordon set out again for Toul. I walked along with him. He enabled me to enjoy what was perhaps my proudest moment. Every man who passed us saluted, and I could not help swelling inwardly, for they were saluting me — or my shoulder bars — and not the older man. Some one who knew me for the boy I was, who had seen me grow up, could see that — well, that I had grown up.

The evening was not marred by the one incident that might have marred it.

At one corner a group of men after saluting turned to speak of the rumor, and one said to another in an intentionally audible whisper, 'Who's goin' to win the war?'

'The "Y,"' came the answer.

'What a pretty compliment,' remarked my friend's companion. But it was not.

I walked out as far as the overturned quad truck full of petrol cylinders that marked the boundary of the town and then turned back for the reason that we officers were required to remain with our outfits at all times ready to move at a half-hour's notice.

Life was not at all strenuous at Lagney, even when drill began on the Monday following our arrival. I was assigned to assist Lieutenant Hinn with the first platoon.

So I helped, and my work consisted mostly of walking round behind the line while Hinn conducted the close-order work, or of leading in playground games, setting-up exercises, and mimic assaults on non-existent machine guns beyond the railway embankment.

On the occasion when I was officer of the guard for the battalion, enough things went wrong to make the job interesting. First off, I did not know of my assignment to the duty until the new guard was already lined up in the street before my window to present arms while the old guard passed before it.

Sergeant Clark, of the new guard, rapped on the window.

'Does the lieutenant know, sir, that the lieutenant is officer of the guard?'

No, the lieutenant did not know, but hastily buckling on his pistol belt and putting on his steel helmet he turned out.

'Tell me what to do,' I was obliged to ask. 'I've never done this before.'

Sergeant Clark whispered his instructions to me. I stood where I was told, saluted when I was told, and, at the end of the ceremony, followed him into the guard-house when I was told to make an inspection on which he accompanied me.

The guard-house was simply a billet of two unfurnished rooms in which the dozen odd offenders of the battalion slept under guard.

My first duty following the inspection was to tell the first sergeant what I thought of him for not notify-

ing me of my assignment to the guard; my second, was to tell the sergeant, officially, where he might find me during the night should he have occasion to call the officer of the guard.

He did not have that occasion and my night's sleep was undisturbed. The next morning the prisoners went on with their task of cleaning up the main street, shoveling out the culverts, cleaning the well, and piling up the manure piles. A few of the older inhabitants observing this activity took the occasion to clean out the gutters on the roofs of their houses and to throw down a great mass of rubbish into the beautifully ordered street. This gave the prisoners more to do. It looked almost as if there were not enough prisoners.

Toward the middle of the afternoon, when every one except the prisoners and the guard were off duty, I heard a shot fired somewhere not far off. Shooting was positively forbidden — the major himself had said so. 'Ha,' I thought, 'here is a chance to get some one else to work on the street.'

I jumped out of my window, crossed the street to the guard-house, took several armed members of the guard who, having heard the shot, were all in readiness, and started out. As if to help us in our search, the man continued firing. So much shooting was puzzling, even alarming. It could not be the accidental discharge of a piece; it came in bursts that suggested a gun battle.

We passed the last house on the road up to the fort, climbed the fence, and turned off into the vineyard from which the sound came. We pushed through the thick hedge at the far end of the vineyard and saw the offender firing with his pistol at a tin can on a stone. It was the major! He was accompanied by the regi-

mental adjutant, the chaplain, and two other officers. I joined the group without explaining why I had come.

'Come on, you're next,' said the major.

I couldn't repeat his own order to him after that. If there had been any other shooting in town later I should have taken no trouble to find out about it and could not have bawled out the offenders with any enthusiasm. One of the worst abuses, in fact the abuse that led to more harm than any other, was the disregard by officers of orders that they themselves had issued or that were intended to apply to every one in uniform and were taken by individual officers not to apply to themselves.

At six o'clock on the morning of the second day after my assignment to the extraordinary job of assistant platoon commander, Wade surprised me while I was dressing. He stuck his head in at the window and remarked casually, 'Hinn's gone to school. You take the platoon.' I took it. I was glad that my experience with odd jobs was over. My only regret was that it was not my old platoon, but I could not expect that, for Gerow commanded it.

On the afternoon of the day set for our departure from Lagney the officers of the Third Brigade, which was made up of the 9th and 23d regiments of infantry, were ordered to meet in the Salvation Army tent at Lucey to hear an address by General Ely, the brigade commander. General Ely spoke forcefully. His subject was the general policy of the army in any attacks in which it might engage in the future. The individual, even the platoon, is nothing, he pointed out. We have the men. We can send in assault wave after assault wave. Perhaps the first or the second or the

third, or even the tenth, will never reach its objective, but ultimately a wave will win through. Each wave must throw everything into the effort of the moment.

He spoke further of certain lessons of the Saint-Mihiel attack. He warned against entering captured dugouts, drinking captured beer, using captured lanterns, or in any way exposing one's men to traps or mines. He cautioned against taking verbal orders from unknown runners or officers, for, as he explained, the enemy was not above sending spies in American uniforms into our own lines to confuse and weaken an attack by ordering a retreat or starting a stampede to the rear. A retreat will never be ordered. Never order one, was his final injunction.

That night — the night of the 26th of September — we marched to Toul. The next morning we entrained for — well, the men said 'it must be a rest area this time.' Rumor among the officers said 'a rest area near Saint-Dizier.' When we passed through Bar-le-Duc, it seemed almost as if rumor were to be verified, for Saint-Dizier and Bar-le-Duc are not far apart. But when we continued west instead of turning south, it was apparent that the usual had happened and that rumor was all wrong. We passed through Songy, a small town northwest of Vitry-le-François and detrained at Vouciennes later in the afternoon. We marched back ten kilometers, beside the railroad over which we had just come, to Songy, where we went into billets.

That march was one of those incidents that a lieutenant, who knew nothing of why we were not allowed to detrain at our village, could not explain. It was one long grumble. Diversion was supplied only by an aviation field not far from the road at one point and

by the passing of a fleet of fully one hundred and fifty airplanes, bombers and scouts.

It was toward sunset; the sky was covered with dark clouds. Just beneath the clouds came the flight, in long V-shaped formations of from five to seven planes each. The small V's were but parts of larger V's of five groups each. They followed one another in line, the point of one well within the open tail of its predecessor. The line swept over from horizon to horizon. The hum of motors, steady and rhythmic, seemed to be a part of the air, to reach into every wrinkle of one's clothing. It was almost visible.

High above the horizon over which the planes disappeared floated the line of observation balloons, *saucisses*. Beyond that floated another line — the line of the balloons of the Black Cross. It was no 'rest area' that we had come to. Every one could see that.

CHAPTER XV

SONGY — AND ONE LONG NIGHT

No billeting officer ever succeeded in getting all of any one else's platoon together under one roof or about one courtyard. My own recent experience as billeting officer at Lagney made it perfectly plain to me why that must be. Consequently, as soon as I was dressed on Saturday morning — and that was unusually early — I set out down the street to learn what had become of my platoon. No matter what had become of it, it could not have been moved the night before, for the men had been too tired and disgruntled to tolerate any shifting once they had dropped their packs.

I met my platoon sergeant hurrying up.

'Does the lieutenant know,' he asked, 'that four of the lieutenant's squads are in a fine barn just next door to his billet with three squads from Mr. Gerow's platoon?' The lieutenant did not know, but he had expected to hear of some such arrangement. The other three squads of my platoon were in a loft some five houses down the street. I ordered them to abandon the place and join the rest of the platoon in the delightful barn that was regally furnished with chicken-wire cots. I ordered Gerow's three squads into the loft.

No sooner had they gone than I met Gerow hurrying in turn toward the scene of activity. He was just too late, but his early morning temper was in fine trim and the words flew. No conclusion was reached — except, that my platoon stayed together where it was and Gerow decided that I should not have got up so early.

The day thus pleasantly begun went on more pleasantly. As I moved back to my billet to shave, I was surprised to see an old Frenchman dressed in the style of the retired 'sea captain' of Cape Cod, even to the flat cap with patent-leather brim, coming down the street followed by a flock of several hundred sheep that filled the street from wall to wall. He passed the gateway into the courtyard of my billet without stopping, but as he passed he blew several blasts on a musical horn that he carried. Out rushed fifteen sheep, the property of my landlady, and joined the flock. On went the crowd. At each house the performance was repeated, the sheep rushing out, undriven, at the sound of the horn. All day the man tended the flock in the field, and at night returned with it up the street. At each house the proper sheep detached themselves from the herd without command and trotted into their pens.

The room that I shared with Elmore was of good size. Its one window looked into the courtyard on which faced the laundry, the three dark cells where lived three huge, bleached porkers, the sheep-pen, the hay-barn where four squads were billeted, and the wagon-shed. The door opened into a tiled hall that extended through the house. In it, as its sole ornament, stood the only bathtub I had yet seen in a village of that size. It was a ponderous gray affair, of zinc and lead. Its position and the fact that there was not enough water near by to wet even the bottom made it quite useless. Another door connected with the den and library of the master of the house, who was in the army. At first the madame kept the bookcase locked; later, after she had gained confidence in us by observing that we listened appreciatively to her explanations

of the identity of each of the persons who appeared in the photographs of confirmation groups, wedding parties, and bands on the walls, and hearing our exclamations of interest over the framed wedding and confirmation certificates that filled the spaces between the pictures, she unlocked the cases and told us to read all we wished. The books looked interesting, but somehow the town, gray and half-depopulated though it was, looked more so.

I had to look about. There was but one café. The battalion headquarters occupied the same building. There was a conventional railway station with crossing-gates, tiled roof, stucco walls, triangle-mounted insulators, and many other details that made me think of the tiny toy railway packed away in a box in the attic at home. There was the usual school and *mairie* combined, the usual number of scum-covered duck ponds; a willow-lined, stagnant brook; a half-fortified strong house; a huge village root cellar with a dungeon-like entrance closed by a grid of hand-forged bars. Our own troops, one soldier in horizon blue, and the shepherd, were the only men about. Little was seen of the women and children.

Saturday was a day of rest. Every one was left to his own devices. The company officers organized a mess where flapjacks were served in quantity, choice cheese and wines were the rule, and roast duck appeared at the principal meal. For the most part the men slept. Toward evening a promenade began. As it progressed I was given opportunity to make two loans: an unsecured one of twenty francs, another of fifteen to Gras who broached the subject by offering as security a two-and-one-half-dollar gold piece mounted inside of a dime. It had never occurred to

me to ask for security, but since he offered it I took it. I still have it, but would be glad to return it quite without thought of asking for repayment of the loan.

After a night of close contact with the single pillow on our bed, Elmore and I decided that we should like a pillowslip. We could not find the word in our French dictionaries; we could not explain our wants to our landlady by any amount of gesturing; we could not find a picture of the article in the library. We called in a member of the company who had lived all his life in Louisiana and who had never spoken anything but French until he was drafted. Usually he made an excellent interpreter, but he did not understand the English word 'pillowslip.' A demonstration showed him what we wanted and, then, with the aid of five francs, he acquired the desired object from the landlady. As he left our room he pointed to the stove.

'Don't do what Lieutenant Rausch did, sir!' he cautioned.

'What did he do?'

'Lighted a fire in his stove. Then in came madame, rushing. She slammed the door. She slammed the stove door open. She dragged out the fire with the toe of his good boot. The boot was burned. She threw the boot in the corner. She was angry. Lieutenant Rausch left. The room was not used. She had put her tea in the stove. Lieutenant Rausch had burned it — but not all.'

Gray clouds and the chill of winter made Sunday a depressing day. Nothing happened to liven it up. Chaplain Patrick's church service, held in a disused carpenter shop drifted high with curly shavings, was colorless. There was no music; he prayed for the folks at home, the cause, the navy, our allies, and all, but he

forgot the army. I was in the mood to notice such a thing.

After the service I dropped in at the orderly-room and learned that we should leave by *camion* during the night. The orders were that each officer should see to it personally that each man in his platoon was provided with two hundred rounds of ammunition, make sure that every rifle was in good shape, that every man was provided with a bayonet, and that emergency rations were adequate.

I was further told that twenty per cent of the strength of the company was to be left behind and that I should make a selection from my platoon. The purpose of leaving twenty per cent behind was, so I understood, that there might be some replacements should excessive casualties weaken the line. I sent instructions to my platoon sergeant, telling him that I should inspect at three o'clock and instructing him to report to my billet before that time with a list of eleven men who could best be spared.

I wrote home beginning my letter with the words, '"The correspondent's letters reach the half-century mark," as they say in the papers.' The letter was in fact number fifty of the same series that I began upon my arrival in France.

At noon the platoon sergeant appeared with the plea that an inspection would be a hardship. I demurred that I could not help that; that orders were orders. He argued in his most punctilious third person style, and with just a trace of derision in his voice, that the other officers had not called for inspections, but had accepted the assurance of their sergeants that the equipment was as it should be. Remembering that I had more than once before done in person tasks that

the other lieutenants had left to their sergeants, and quite agreeing that the inspection would break into the lazy day that should go before a hard night, I called off the inspection.

At three o'clock the platoon sergeant appeared again. This time his breath smelled too strongly of wine, his derision of my inexperience was too open, his third person address was too involved, his face was too flushed, and yet his first act was to ask me to recommend him for assignment to the Army Candidates' School. Word had just been received at the orderly-room that each company could at once send four sergeants to study for commissions. I said that I would think it over and we proceeded to business. The equipment was in good shape, I was assured; he would select the eleven men.

I accepted his word as to the equipment, for I had no reason to suppose that all was not well there. It was obvious that we were 'going up,' and no one wants to 'go up' unprepared. The delay in the other matter was inexcusable.

On my way to the orderly-room I dropped in at the billet and had Morgan, my second sergeant, assemble the platoon. The inspection of gas masks took but fifteen minutes. There were no damaged masks as far as I could see. The first sergeant had, as I thought likely, prepared a list of the least desirable twenty per cent of the company. My platoon lost less than a squad.

While I was at the orderly-room things began to happen. Wade came in and I spoke to him on the subject of recommending the platoon sergeant for the officers' school. I positively refused to recommend him, but I felt it desirable to detach him from the

platoon. From all I had seen he was artificially happy and irresponsible at least half the time. Wade objected less to drinking than I did, but he admitted the man's growing incompetency. My old friend Sergeant Bohon of the second platoon we all recommended with entire sincerity, though we were sorry to lose him; doubly sorry because Lieutenant Gerow, who commanded the second platoon, had already been chosen to remain behind with the twenty per cent.

'Gosh!' said Gerow when the decision about Bohon was made, 'that kid Beaudry's next in line in that platoon. Yakely'll have to do it.'

I agreed that Yakely, who had been made sergeant during my short stay with the platoon, was the man.

No sooner was the list of appointments made than word came from regimental headquarters that Wade was transferred to the regimental supply company in accordance with a request that he had made some time before. Thompson, the senior first lieutenant, took command at once and Wade left to oversee the packing of his roll. On the heels of this first order came one from the office of the sergeant-major of the battalion instructing us to take half of our discarded twenty per cent for stretcher-bearers. Having been with the first platoon for but five days, I did not know the men well and was no more capable of making this selection than I was of drawing up the original list. I did know the second platoon and could put in an occasional word of counsel when it was being discussed. With the first sergeant, who did know the men, we officers went over the list and divided it into two classifications, 'dumber' and 'dumbest.' Originally it had all been 'dumber.'

At five o'clock the mess sergeant served a cold meal

and at five-thirty the rolling kitchen of the battalion left town in a column. They were mule-drawn and would travel more slowly than the *camion* train in which we should ride when we left at three in the morning.

Early in the evening Elmore's striker called and made up his blanket roll that was supposed to contain all the property that he did not carry on his person. Later I made up my smaller roll, and while I was doing so Elmore discovered his best uniform lying on the bed behind the curtains. 'Put this in your roll, will you?' he asked. I did — and never again did he see the uniform nor I the clothing roll.

At nine o'clock the wagon, with all our records, the officers' clothing, and our spare supplies, moved off to join the kitchens.

I retired, half-dressed, to sleep until two-thirty. At two-thirty I left Elmore without waking him, for he was to remain behind to settle all claims for damaged wine-cellars and rabbit hutches that might be brought by the inhabitants of Songy against the battalion, and went to the platoon's billet. Sergeant Morgan was hard at work rousing the men. It's bad enough to get yourself up at two-thirty, let alone having to get up fifty other reluctant fellows. All but a few of the men had their packs rolled and were ready. The few were scrabbling madly. The platoon sergeant was in a drunken sleep and awoke dazed and useless. He staggered into the line of file-closers at one minute past three. Enraged, I was thankful that we were so soon to be rid of him and that I had not perjured myself by recommending him for a school for responsible men.

The company lined up in the dark street only five minutes late. It stayed lined up, and cursing sleepily,

until the battalion was formed, only half an hour late. The battalion stayed lined up until the major appeared only three quarters of an hour late. We all stayed until four-fifteen when a motor-cycle courier from regimental headquarters came with the word that the *camion* train had not been heard from. We might go back to our billets and wait — but we should not unroll our packs or make ourselves comfortable. I slept in a chair until six o'clock. A nice, efficient way to run a war!

When I appeared on the scenes at six o'clock, I found that Thompson and Rausch had already begun to make arrangements for getting breakfast for the company in the absence of the kitchen and all supplies. As I got the story, they had with much difficulty persuaded the town major to issue bread cards to them. Then, pooling some of their own funds, they had bought enough bread for one meal for two hundred and fifty men. Presumably the other company commanders in town did likewise. What the townsfolk did that day is a mystery. The men borrowed kitchen stoves or built fires and drew on their emergency rations for coffee. None of the bread came my way and I ate cheese and cheese only.

After breakfast the interrupted wait for the *camion* train began again. At eleven o'clock word was brought to me in my billet that the train had come. I slung on my musette bag and pack which contained a single blanket and my emergency ration, said 'See you again' to Elmore, who was at work in the study on some of his claims, and dashed for the billet. The platoon was already formed in the street. We joined the company and marched to the end of the street where the train had stopped.

Down the gray road as far as one could see stretched a line of dust-laden French trucks painted the characteristic steel blue, numbered in big white figures, and decorated only with the unit insignia, a red spade in a white square. The commanding officer and Major Peyton stood together directing, and an adjutant called out the commands. The company went forward in column of twos. Some sixteen men were packed inside the canvas cover of each *camion*, which, at a word from the adjutant, drove off down the left of the road half a mile or so, to wait until the entire train should be formed. As usual in such operations the squads were badly mixed. Two men from the first squad would be packed in with parts of the last two squads of the company before; the remaining five men and the corporal might get together; then would come the whole of the next squad; then three men from the third. Unfortunately the French major insisted that all the sergeants from our company should travel together in one *camion*. This left no one in particular in charge of the platoons. Similarly three *camions* were reserved for the officers of the battalion.

By noon the train was loaded and the trucks got under way. The vibration on the hard macadam was dizzyingly severe. The trucks seemed quite devoid of spring. The wooden seats were comfortless. The cobble pavements of the towns fairly dislocated every individual vertebra. The white dust drifted in in a stifling cloud.

As we passed through Châlons-sur-Marne the commanding officer of the train must have had a convincing demonstration of his error in separating sergeants and lieutenants from their commands. At the edge of the city the men in the truck ahead began to look hope-

fully about. It was evident that they were hungry in spite of the jolting — I was *not* — and that they were looking about for signs of a halt. The trucks put on more speed. The men looked momentarily discouraged. Then we passed a bakery. At once the men began to bring out handfuls of change. The two men nearest the tail board took up a collection. A man near the front began to shout that another bakery was in sight. The men at the rear dropped over the tail board, swung off their feet for a few steps, caught the stride of the truck, and finally let go with a rush to the curb to dodge our oncoming truck. They swooped into the shop, slammed down a handful of francs, grabbed five long loaves of bread and jumped into the sixth truck down the line behind us. Their comrades in the truck ahead would have been 'out of luck' if the process had not been repeated by nearly every truck that went by. You lost the loaves of bread that you paid for, but some unselfish fellow with an armful of loaves that some one else had paid for was sure to climb in on you. The platoons, squads, and companies were worse scrambled than ever.

An hour beyond Châlons the train drew into the roadside ditch and halted. Dizzied by the vibration and almost seasick, I dropped to the ground which seemed to vibrate just as the truck had done, and walked unsteadily into the field. A line of rifle stacks paralleled the line of trees. Platoons were forming along it. My anxiety about losing the men was proved unfounded. Every one showed up within half an hour.

When the company had been assembled, we marched through the fields for some distance to a camp consisting of a group of five of the standard wooden barracks. Camp Lafayette, the place was called. One of the

buildings was an officers' barracks; one a stable; three supply sheds. The men pitched their pup tents. From the road and camp there were no other buildings in sight, but the Camp de Châlons on which we were camped was swarming with the men of a division. Groups of huts were scattered irregularly over the great, rolling plain. The trees hid many. The irregular arrangement was intended to attract as little attention as might be to the others.

The rolling kitchen was at hand, installed in a shed; the blanket rolls were piled outside the door of the officers' barracks; the barracks were electrically lighted and impenetrably curtained. The earth ceased to vibrate with the motion of the truck and I spent a quiet evening in conversation. At ten o'clock sharp an airplane passed invisibly overhead and dropped a flare some half-mile up the road behind us. Immediately there sounded the rising whistle of a shell, the boom of the gun that fired it, the shriek of the shell's passage, and the leaping reverberation of its explosion close to the spot where the light had fallen. A dozen or so more shells tore over after the first and exploded in quick succession. I slept dreamlessly, though some eighteen men, as I learned the next day, had been killed in that demonstration.

Next day the sun shone and the sky was blue for the first time since we had detrained at Vouciennes. I was no longer depressed. Summer had not gone after all. France was still beautiful. The double line of balloons was nearer, much nearer than it had been at Songy, but except for that, and the forgotten shells of the night before, the war was still distant.

We were all restricted to camp, but left free of duties during the morning. In the afternoon two hours of

drill were ordered. I drilled the platoon in close order and directed the playground games such as 'leap-frog' and 'pass the belt,' the army variant of 'three deep.' In the intervals of inactivity we watched a troop of mounted French lancers maneuvering near by.

But ten minutes of the two hours remained when a runner came from Lieutenant Thompson with information that we should 'go up' that night. It had been perfectly obvious all day that we were to 'go up' and the order to drill had seemed to me ill-advised. The time would have been better spent in resting. Of course the platoon received the confirmation of our thought in silence, but the silence seemed ominous and jeering. Looks could say, nearly as plainly as words, 'They knew when we were to move. They could have let us rest just as well as not, and instead they've gone and got us tired just before an all-night hike.' I echoed the words inwardly with as sour an expression as any one.

The men returned to their tents, dismantled them, and rolled packs. I went back to my bunk and strapped up my roll. My platoon sergeant reported to say that he and Bohon were ordered to the School as had been expected. This left Morgan as platoon sergeant, the only sergeant under me. Emergency rations consisting wholly of corned beef and monkey meat, or canned hash, were issued.

Evening came on rapidly, a damp, white mist rose in streamers like smoke from a fire on a windless day. A 'four-o'clock-in-the-morning' chill settled over the camp. The hot supper from the rolling kitchens could not dispel it. Groups gathered about huge fires in the open. As darkness fell, the fires had to be ordered extinguished, for they would furnish too good a

mark. This was a blow; there was much grumbling, but the order was obeyed. The plain was dark. We waited.

At about eight o'clock we were told that we might draw overcoats. Supply wagons had come up and dumped out huge piles of the garments upon the ground. Since there were no lights there could be no system. The twelve hundred men of a battalion swarmed over the pile, trying on and discarding, trying on and discarding, in a wild scramble. I joined in with the rest and quickly found a coat that had no fault except short sleeves. Like all the coats of the A.E.F., it was ridiculously bob-tailed, for originally it had hung to within ten inches of the ground, and the lines had been cut accordingly, but now it was shorn off above the knees and the edge hung unhemmed and irregular. But it was warm and comfortable and would not drag in the mud, as a long coat would have done — and looks do not count when you are cold.

The rush was over in ten minutes, but the tedious wait was not renewed. The companies formed at once, hurriedly, and swung into a column of squads. Just as the word to move was given a searchlight miles behind was snapped on and its rays shining weirdly through the tree-tops cast an army of black shapes on into the night ahead. Then up the beam between the shadows came a familiar sound, the ominous double hum of a Boche plane, and hardly had the sound become audible when the plane was upon us. Two gleaming lines, where the light struck the edges of the plane, two disc wheels twenty feet above our heads, a black shape leaning out. The tiny machine whipped by, zoomed up in an instant out of the light, and was gone from sight. A shell so audible that I felt I could see it whistled down

the searchlight beam and disappeared toward the front — a miss. A bomb fell two miles off and the light went out. Jerry had not been looking for us, after all.

The night of Tuesday, October 1st to 2d, is the longest I remember, except the night of October 2d to 3d. We marched in column of squads through a protecting darkness. The row of tall poplars on our right was invisible; we knew it only at the halts. Beyond that row and beyond us on the left I could imagine nothing but uncultivated rolling barrens, buried in cold mist.

Shortly after the second halt chance gave us something to talk about. Smoking was forbidden because smoking meant tiny points of light and the flare of matches that could be seen for miles and might well attract a plane. Consequently when we saw a red light off the road to our left, we were curious, indignant, and disgruntled.

'What is it?'

'A café.'

'Some colonel having a party.'

'Couple of Froggies and a bottle of vin blink.'

The light was brilliant. As we got nearer, we saw that it illuminated a big circle of ground. As we got nearer still, three more lights flashed. The four marked the corners of a field. They were powerful groups of bulbs in great globes that were black on top, but clear beneath, so that the field around them fairly shone. The front of an airplane hangar was just visible in the shadows.

More comments came from the column.

'Damn lighthouses.'

'More light'n about forty million cigs.'

'All the planes for forty miles can see that.'

There was an ear-splitting roar, a fountain of fire belched up from the base of the farthest light, angular fragments of flame whirred into the darkness in every direction, solid fragments of something rattled into the trees above us, branches fell, a shower of leaves rustled down, the column melted instantly and dropped in the gutters, the road was bare in the blaze of the three remaining lights. The lights *had* attracted a bird of the wrong color and the bird had dropped a bomb. A warm fragment fell on Sergeant Morgan, who was at the head of the platoon. It had struck the tree and so lost velocity. No one was hurt.

The plane disappeared. We re-formed on the road and went on. Our next halt was at fifteen minutes past midnight. We fell out on the paved sidewalk of the town where the time found us. The men bolstered up their packs against the sides of the buildings or along the curbs so that they could relieve their shoulders of the strain. My pack was so light that it had not yet begun to bite. My harness was so simple that I could swing it off.

Soon a whisper near by suggested to some one, 'Let's go into this door and smoke.' Some one and his friend accepted the suggestion. The two went into the doorway and found — no door. At their exclamation of surprise, the rest of us turned from watching the roaring, slow-moving column of long 155-millimeter guns that was passing, to examine the house. It was not a house. It was merely four walls. Roof, floors, and windows were gone. Even as we investigated, the moon began to shine dimly through the clouds and we could see the stains of fire on the walls and the tangle of wreckage in the cellar. Across the street was a gap in the row of houses. There the walls had fallen. As

U.S. Official Drawing

'WE MARCHED IN COLUMN OF SQUADS THROUGH A PROTECTING DARKNESS'

The captain and lieutenant carry canes. All have gas-masks at the 'alert' position under their chins

the moonlight strengthened slowly the town became visible. It had been destroyed by fire, but not recently. The streets and sidewalks were cleared and neat. Fallen blocks of stone were piled systematically against the walls of the houses. All miscellaneous wreckage had been pitched into the cellar holes.

That was Souain. But I did not know then. All I knew was that we were east of Châlons.

Beyond the town we turned from the white, empty macadam road that vanished down the avenue of trees, into a muddy cart path. Flat, chilled fields stretched away everywhere into the shifting mist. I began to tire. So did every one else. The column lengthened. The grumbling became more automatic, the shifting of rifles from shoulder to shoulder more frequent. At a command from up ahead we shifted into a column of twos. That gave us all more room on the path, but it made the column longer. We had to run in spurts to fill up the gaps. We entered an area of hills like low sand-dunes, dotted with small trees intensely black in the half-light. Behind one I caught a glimpse of two men. The next morning I learned that two men had vanished. Better for us all that they left so early in the game.

Over a hill we went. The time for the halt passed. The time for the second halt passed and still no halt. It was a continual struggle to keep up with those ahead, to keep from falling in the mud. For the platoon following it was worse still. We worked our way single file through a narrow passage in a wide band of wire. We ran to form in double file again. We splashed through half a mile of lowlands inches deep in water. We clambered exhaustedly over a stile onto the white road again. It seemed like the road we had left so long be-

fore. It seemed as though we had circled endless miles from it and then come back to it but half a mile or so from where we had left. But now the road was not deserted. It was so packed with trucks and men that we could hardly get our two files into the gutter.

One of Lieutenant Thompson's runners came back to me, where I was urging on the rear of the platoon column, and notified me that we were soon to draw grenades and additional ammunition. Each man except the auto-riflemen should draw two grenades and a bandolier. Hardly had I disseminated the order when the files stopped momentarily and then moved on more slowly. The men who were issuing the ammunition were fairly throwing it at the column. They wanted to get away from there before daylight, I suppose. Well they might, for all around them was a wall of boxes filled with explosives that the slightest hostile attention would convert instantly into a hole in the ground.

The men handed out O.F. grenades, with tin cases, and Mark I grenades, with serrated iron cases, indiscriminately. Our men received them, stowed them in their overcoat pockets, and hurried on to the pile of bandoliers; each grabbed one, threw it over his shoulder and plodded off, slowed down by the additional weight. A hundred and twenty rounds of ball cartridges weigh a lot even on the scales in broad daylight. They weigh at least four times as much when added to a load consisting of full pack, overcoat, rifle, one hundred rounds, and accrued souvenirs that one has been carrying from eight at night until three-thirty in the morning.

No one got any rest out of that operation, for there was no halt. In fact there was no halt at all after our departure from Souain after midnight. We were hurry-

ing to get 'somewhere' in time to attack at six-thirty in the morning.

By five o'clock the sky had begun to lighten. We were on a white, hard-paved road. Gray fields, unbroken by house or tree or any living object, stretched away on both sides. As the light grew stronger we came to a town. The highest point of the highest standing wall was but four feet above ground level. A few battered stems of trees pointed blackly hither and yon. A French motor ambulance parked among the ruins was, except the column that disappeared into the shadows before and behind, the only sign of life in all the desert.

Day came. The plain was a desolation of low rolling hills, as barren in the light as it had been in the gray darkness. The pace became faster, then slowed as we came to a mine crater that rendered every one silent with awed curiosity. The road ended in a white pit that might have been a drydock for a vessel of three thousand tons. The sides sloped at an angle of sixty degrees or more; the hard, white chalk soil had been broken up so that it looked like rain-soaked flour. Plank roadways of recent construction lay in long folds along the mountainous rim where the showering earth from the bottom of the pit had fallen.

Just over the ridge beyond the first crater we came to another crater of equal size. On one side an engineer unit was working on the plank road. On the other a battery of seventy-fives was making heavy weather of the plank road. We passed and the road became a road once more.

Now we were in the midst of what might, from its appearance, have forever been No-Man's-Land. It is no exaggeration to say that as far as one could see—

and one can see far in a country where every tree has been broken into splinters and ploughed under — the ground was a mass of shell holes. Hole merged into hole. The soil had been tossed and winnowed by shells, not once but many times. Mixed with it were ribbons of barbed wire, posts of wood, steel corkscrew posts, boots, helmets, fragments of cloth, pieces of motor trucks, wheels of guns, rifles, signboards, coats, eight-inch timbers splintered as if broken across the knee of a Colossus. Everything was torn and bent and pounded into the earth.

The head of the company turned off the road to the left. The moment before I was to turn a voice hailed me.

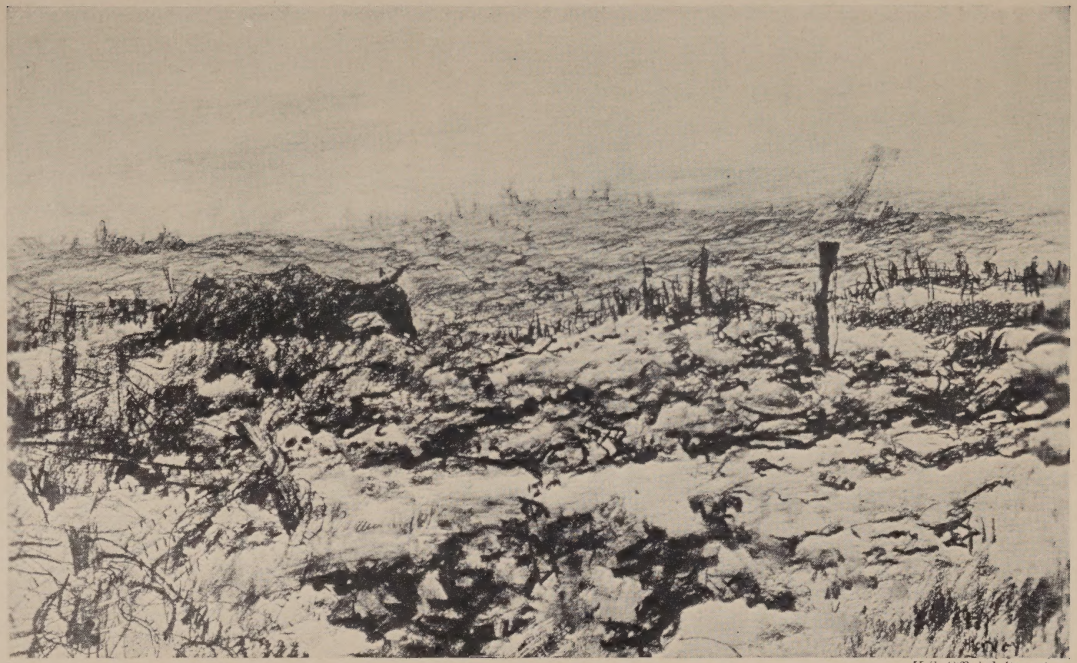
'Hi! Ranlett! How's everything?'

It was Parsons, whom I had last seen at the A.I.S.S. at Fort Plesnoy. In the rush of a moment we inquired for each other and then he was gone. He was regimental intelligence officer of the 9th Infantry and, with his detachment, was looking for his outfit that had preceded him. For an instant I forgot how tired I was.

As a bevy of shells came over the hill ahead and exploded not far from us, the company broke from all semblance of column.

'Here's where we stop!' Thompson shouted.

Each man leisurely picked out the most comfortable-appearing unoccupied shell hole and settled down. In some cases a whole squad would be together; in others, only two men. Daly, the pleasant-appearing and youthful fellow who was my striker in billets, and McQuire, a much older man — probably he was all of thirty-four — who were my runners, occupied a commodious hole with me. Backell, my other runner, went with Sergeant Morgan.



U.S. Official Drawing

'NOW WE WERE IN THE MIDST OF WHAT MIGHT, FROM ITS APPEARANCE, HAVE FOREVER BEEN NO-MAN'S-LAND'

Hardly were we settled when Thompson called the platoon commanders together. Lieutenants Rausch and Given, Sergeant Yakely and myself gathered with him in his private hole and received his instructions that we should form our platoons in squad columns and be prepared to advance when the barrage should begin. That would probably be at six-thirty. It was then six. The enemy was somewhere over the hill; how far or how near none of us knew. Nor did we know our objectives, who was supporting us, or what sort of country we were going into. We should be ready to jump off!

We were ready. I went back — began to breakfast on corned willie.

CHAPTER XVI

JUST BEFORE THE JUMP-OFF

We waited. I finished McQuire's can of 'monkey meat' and lay back to rest. I did not feel nearly as tired as I had at two o'clock and I was not worried about the impending jump-off. I had been rushing so hard all night that I had had no time to worry; now that I had time I knew so little about what was coming that I just could not tell where to begin worrying and so desisted completely.

At seven o'clock we were still resting comfortably. A dozen or so Boche planes came over and circled about among the shell bursts so high that they were silent. When they had gone shells began to come over, but they landed in the waste half a mile to the rear and did no harm. Then a balloon with a black cross on its silver flank drifted up at the end of its rope two miles behind the front and the shells came nearer. A dozen fell in a group two hundred yards away. Then the other arm of the bracket was fired. The new group landed on the top of the ridge fifty yards or so in front. Still no one was hurt. The gunners settled down to a routine of one shell a minute on that ridge.

As we waited we began to look about. Two hundred yards to our left the road over which we had come disappeared over the top of the ridge to the front. Three miles to the rear, it disappeared over the horizon halfway between the spots from which two French captive balloons had risen. The country was treeless, barren and devoid of any sign of ever having been inhabited.

Our battalion was deployed for a quarter of a mile along the reverse slope of the ridge. One end rested on the road. Beyond the road were other men in shell holes, but they, like the rest of us, were visible only occasionally.

Toward ten o'clock, when we had long since laid aside our packs and taken off our coats so that we might rest better, we saw the rolling kitchens coming up the road. They turned out onto a spot of ground that was not wholly shattered and the activity about them made it apparent that food was being cooked. That put a new face on things. The enemy could not be just on the other side of the ridge if the kitchens were allowed so near.

An hour later, when we had long been entirely comfortable and more than half of us were asleep, we were informed that we might rest; that we should not jump off that day. The news made not the slightest stir. The next order, that we should send a detail to the kitchen for grub cans, was more interesting. We sent one and got back all the cans of hot slum they could carry. A squad at a time went to the 'grub hole' and each man came away with a heaping, steaming mess-kit and a cup of coffee. All complaints about the conduct of the war were forgotten.

During this operation the company suffered the only casualty of the day. One young fellow who was returning to his hole with his mess-kit full of slum was struck on the shoulder by a fragment from a shell that exploded some fifty yards away to the front. He was a member of the second platoon, but since that platoon was commanded by a sergeant he reported to me as the nearest officer. His shoulder had been badly bruised by the fragment, which was apparently about

half the size of my hand, and had already begun to stiffen. It was plain that he would not be fitted for active fighting, so I went with him to the hole where the dentist, who was the most available medical officer, was seated and turned the man over to him. Without giving treatment the lieutenant sent the fellow back to the kitchens.

The shelling continued intermittently until sunset. Occasionally single shells of small caliber would explode right in the midst of our company area, but since none landed in occupied shell holes they gave us little to talk about.

A group of some ten 75-millimeter guns, manned by French artillerymen, that came up and located unsheltered in the open not more than two hundred yards behind us, was the principal target, but it too seemed to suffer hardly at all. The operations of the battery were actually more disturbing than the operations against it. It fired steadily for an hour and kept me from getting any of the sleep I was so anxious for. Whenever a gun went off a long, sword-shaped flame of red with a blinding base of white would leap from the muzzle. The barrel of the piece would slide back with greased smoothness almost through the firing-shield and the carriage would jump into the air and back, as if something had exploded under it, only to be held by the trail firmly fixed in the ground and flop back into place. The sound of the explosion was sharp, earsplitting, and infinitely more startling than the earth-muffled blast of a shell burst, and was followed by a long whiplash of sound that seemed to stretch like an elastic fastened to the shell and then to break and snap back into the piece. Then the shell itself passed over with a scream and rose gradually, invisible, but so

slowly and audibly that I always felt that I could follow it if I could only have got my eye on it in the first place.

There were aërial diversions as well as the diversions by the artillery and the slum cannons. About mid-morning a great fleet of airplanes came from the rear and, gaining altitude as they approached, passed over the line a mile up and proceeded steadily onward in spite of the hostile shells that burst below them. Evidently the affair was a daylight bombing raid.

In mid-afternoon, when the sky had become thickly overcast with low clouds, one of the two captive balloons that had been up all day, presumably directing our battery and the other batteries in the vicinity, broke away from its mooring just as the crew on the car started to pull it down. It rose with deliberation, straight toward the clouds, and just as its nose burrowed into the gray layer, two specks appeared below the basket, dropping fast, with streamers trailing above. At the instant that the basket vanished the streamers above the specks changed with traceless swiftness into smooth, white parachutes. The descent of the men at once became leisurely. We watched for fifteen minutes or more until both parachutes had disappeared over a ridge out of sight.

Judging from their snores, many of the men slept soundly that afternoon. Constant interruptions kept me from making it. At about five-thirty Lieutenant Thompson summoned me, with the other platoon commanders and the sergeants, to his hole. He had just talked with the major and learned what was what. The commander of Company 'K' had lent him one of the two maps in the battalion, for a few moments, that he might explain the plans to us.

'Here we are,' he said, pointing to a line of trenches marked in blue on the map. 'We were supposed to attack at six-thirty this morning, but the plan changed at the last moment. Instead we shall move two and a half kilos over this way, to the right, as soon as it gets a little darker. We'll jump off at six-thirty tomorrow morning in a column of battalions, two companies wide. The whole of the 9th and one of our battalions will be ahead of us. Our objective is here. About five kilos.' He pointed to a line drawn in blue pencil. 'The Marines come in on the left and we cut off a sort of wedge. That's the dope and it's all the major has!

'You will get your men ready to step out when you see 'K' there, go. Try to keep a hundred yards between platoons. We don't want them to see the whole parade at once. We'll step on over a way and leave our packs.'

We talked for a few minutes, deciding how we should distribute our platoons in the attack formation, and then went back to our shell holes to get ready.

Rausch's platoon set out before mine. I filled the gap between it and mine with two men and they set out at the head of my column. Morgan brought up the rear. We started off well enough with wide gaps between squads, but by the time we had crossed the road were beginning to bunch. Hardly had we crossed the road when a signal corps outfit, coming from somewhere across the fields, forced its way into the column between Rausch's and my platoon that made a solid line in single file for half a mile ahead. Looking back, I saw an equally solid line extending to the far end of our old position. It was simply impossible to keep the proper interval and as we went on all interval was lost.

Odd groups of medical men, squads from other companies, and unidentified parties wedged into the column at every step until we were fairly stepping on one another's heels.

The line dipped down from the ground level of the shell-swept area into the remains of a German trench. The trench was some eight feet deep. The sides were eroded and sloped widely. Rows and rows of red, green, brown, and blue wires stretched on insulated poles along what had been its forward side. Occasionally all trace of the trench disappeared in a pit made by some large shell. There were signposts, all in German, there were stores of grenades, there were pieces of hard bread, there were coats and boots.

From the door of one dugout projected the feet of a dead defender. Soon I saw more bodies. Some lay about the big shell holes, some in the trench bottom, some on the parapet or half-buried in it. All had been turned face down, all lay with legs, arms, and necks bent or twisted in unnatural, impossible attitudes. All looked like little more than bundles of green gray cloth and seemed but natural parts of a scene where all was wreckage. Though they were the first bodies I had seen, I hardly thought of them as men and was not in the least awed by them.

The trench led us out of the devastated area into the flat floor of a valley. True, the trees that dotted the valley were nothing but upright poles, and there were shell holes, but there was also grass and much unbroken turf. A bluff in the rear shut off the setting sun, lower hills on the other three sides deadened the sound of the distant artillery fire.

When I saw Thompson and Rausch with some of the men standing aboveground near a huge pile of

earth that marked the site of a dugout, I climbed out of the trench. Soon the company assembled.

'We'll prepare our battle packs before it gets dark and leave our stuff here until after the drive,' said Thompson. 'Take your emergency rations and all your tools and ammunition. Leave your coats or not as you wish. We'll stack the stuff down there in the trench and leave three men as a guard. We'll sleep until eleven and then start out to the place where we are to jump off.'

I set about arranging my stuff. Should I take my overcoat? No! Positively not! For the first time I pictured myself fighting hand to hand. My biceps were small. I could not imagine myself as particularly successful either in a wrestling match or a bayonet fight. I simply could not be impeded by a coat that was sure to get heavy, sure to be hampering, and likely to catch in the barbed wire. I wrote my name in indelible pencil inside the coat, wrapped my blanket in it, and tied the bundle. My musette bag, one of the popular French satchels of canvas and leather with two fastening straps and a broad-webbed shoulder strap, I set aside. It contained my field glasses, my shaving-kit, some handkerchiefs, some letters from home, my Sam Browne belt, and my leather puttees. What I did keep was easy to carry.

The G.A.R. men whc used to speak to the children in grammar school before Memorial Day every year interested me most when they described their wartime experiences in detail. I wanted to know just what they wore and carried and ate, as well as why they fought. That is my warrant for detailing what I took with me into battle.

It's nice to think that if you're killed people will

know who you were. I had a privately made silver identification tag on my left wrist along with my wrist watch; about my neck, on the very piece of tape on which they hung when I left Camp Upton, were my two issue identification tags of aluminum. By carving alterations with my pocket-knife I had kept them up to date. One side read '2448602 — 2nd Lt.'; the other, 'Louis F. Ranlett — ₱¥₮-₵ø.₿-₵ø₹₱-$g₮. ȝø$ Inf.'

I wore a money-belt that contained my letter of credit, heavy woolen underwear, hand-knitted woolen socks, an issue woolen shirt, the heavy woolen sleeveless sweater that my mother had knitted, my old enlisted man's issue woolen uniform, wrap leggins, field boots. Except for my gold shoulder bars there was no distinguishing my uniform from that of a private. On my left shoulder was sewed the blue diamond-shaped piece of cloth that distinguished every member of the third battalion of the 23d. The men of the first battalion wore blue squares; the men of the second, blue triangles. The battalions of the other regiments used the same system with cloths of different color. Division insignia, that later became such a colorful part of the uniforms of the A.E.F., had not yet been thought of.

Half the soldiers of the Civil War were saved from death by Bibles that turned bullets from their hearts. Every one knows that. Of course I carried my khaki-covered Testament, but not in my left breast-pocket. My steel mirror was there. In other pockets were my small silk flag, my notebook with a list of names of the men in the platoon, a box of matches, my money, a knife, an indelible pencil. My whistle dangled from my breast-pocket; the satchel of my gas mask was strapped at the alert beneath my chin. My pistol belt carried

my canteen, the automatic pistol, four extra loaded magazines, and my first-aid packet. My raincoat hung awkwardly from it at one side. My pack held nothing but my mess-kit, two cans of beans, and two cans of meat. My steel helmet topped off.

The men who were to stay behind to guard the packs awakened us when the word came from the major. I had neglected to wind my watch. It had stopped.

'Morgan,' said I, 'what time?'

'Ten-thirty, sir.'

I set it.

We got under way with hardly any talking.

The messenger led the company in single file to where the major and the French guide were waiting. There we entered a trench that varied from three to five feet in depth.

Messages were constantly being passed up and down the file. One sergeant would shout them to the next.

'"K" Company in line,' came from the rear.

'Hold up until "M" Company joins,' came from the front.

We stopped.

Eventually the message that 'M' had joined traveled up through 'K' and 'I.'

'Where is "L"? Any one may answer,' was next.

No one could. 'Have we picked up "L" yet?' was constantly repeated — 'L' was lost. It did not join the column that night and the major must have been plenty worried. But it did get to the jump-off place on time. Our night — which was not an easy one — must have been a picnic compared to theirs.

A soft rain began to fall.

We came out upon a road. The light from flares and rockets far away made the wet trees, the steel

helmets, and the pools in the road shine oddly. They were the only things visible in that tiny valley. But that was not for long. We overtook a column of artillery. The guns and backs of the horses glistened.

'Hi! You birds are lucky, walkin',' shouted an artilleryman from his place on a lead horse.

'Give anythin' for a ride.'

'Don't have to give a thing. I'm wore out on this horse. When I get down I'll never be able to sit again.'

'You don't know when you're well fixed. We hain't done nothin' but walk for the last two days. Change?'

So went the banter. The infantry had had too much walking, the artillery too much riding, but both plugged ahead.

We passed the guns and came out on high ground.

Where was the front? I had thought I knew. But — first we had gone away from it; then we had gone toward it; now we turned away again; and now it might be anywhere. We were confused. I wondered if the guide knew where he was going. We seemed in the midst of a deserted plain. Gang rockets — German rockets — rose leisurely, first on one side, then on the other, then behind, then forward. Were we surrounded?

The men began to grumble. 'Time for a halt. — All night again to-night. — No rest. — They'll get us all tangled up with the Dutchmen 'thout ever knowin' it. — No Frog can find his way in the dark.'

But a halt came. We stopped in our tracks, took off our helmets, and placed them inside-up in the mud of the road and sat down on them.

Ten minutes was good. On we went again, up a rise and to the right. It seemed as though we were circling round to our starting-place.

A gun was fired far off behind us. The shell came

whistling — direct — terrifying. It burst in the dark just to the left and behind.

'He's a spy, that guide. Has us on a spot the Dutchmen shoot up regular,' was the opinion of the files.

Again came the sound of a gun and its shell. The thing burst very close — a sheet of flame, a fountain of fiery fragments. The men dropped in the road, but stood up again quickly and started on.

Two shells came simultaneously; one to the rear, one in the same spot as the former. Instantly with the burst there sounded screams of intense agony. It did not seem that men could make such a sound, but men were making it. The column disappeared completely. Every one had sought shelter for himself. One more shell came. The screams went on, broken by cries, 'Shoot me! Hurry! God! Shoot me!'

'Re-form! First platoon on the road! Here!' Morgan and I were back on the road struggling to reassemble the platoon. The other officers were not in sight. I felt terribly alone and frantically fearful that I could not get my men back. But they came.

'First platoon! Any one hit?' I shouted.

'No. It was the second,' some one answered. 'Jodlowski an' Lichodziewski an' more.'

The platoons ahead were re-formed and we all started, half-running.

My heart had just begun to resume its normal beat when, 'Is there an officer here?' some one shouted.

What could be wanted? Anything. Would not any one of the other officers speak up? I hadn't got over thinking of myself as a kid. I wasn't used to having people dependent on me. I felt more alone than ever, but I forced myself to speak. 'Here.' I had declared myself. That gave me confidence. Thereafter I was

ready for any demands. I knew that I could trust myself to act no matter how fearful I might be. 'What's wanted?'

'Where is there a dressing-station?' said a man who had run forward from the group where the shells had fallen.

I nearly laughed. It seemed ridiculous that any one should ask that of a person who knew as little as I did about where we were. Yet the fact that I was looked on as an authority on something gave me more confidence. Of course the officers were supposed to have seen a map.

'There's one back near where the kitchens were this afternoon.' — When in doubt do something. — 'Two stretcher-bearers fall out.' Two of my group went with the man.

Five minutes later we passed a dressing-station manned by French. 'Send down the road for those men,' some one shouted to one of the men at the door. It must have been done, for my stretcher-bearers were with us at the jump-off and they could not have made it if they had gone back over that tangle of roads and trenches to the station I had directed them to.

We turned off the road into a streak of white — a trench. We stumbled over men, rolled in blankets, sleeping, and bumped against a few sentinels who were barely awake.

'What outfit?'

'Fifth Marines. — What outfit?'

'Twenty-Third.'

'Don't wake the baby.'

We did not. A thousand men can step over you without waking you if you are sleepy enough. The Marines were.

Above us, against the still intermittently lighted sky, appeared the jagged outlines of a ruined town. We crossed a hard-paved road and a railroad. One end of the roof of the station platform was standing. On it the station name was visible. 'Somme-Py.'

We passed more Marines; we passed a large body of French resting close under the foot of a small bluff. I looked at my watch. Five-thirty and no sign of daylight. We must be nearly there, I thought, and spoke to some one.

Grumbling in the ranks became constant. 'Fine training for a fight! — Run all night! — Just like Soissons and Château-Thierry. — No rest. — Damn the officers! Can't they find the way?'

There was no rest. It was six-fifteen. Were we going to be late to the jump-off?

I mentioned my fear to Morgan. 'Five-fifteen, I make it,' said he.

'That's better. I wondered where the sun was.'

He must have read his watch wrong when I had asked the time at our start.

It was a relief to know we still had some time, but it was unpleasant to think of hurrying on, almost at a jog, for another hour. The platoon ahead was making good time.

Faint dawn began to show. Occasionally a machine gun not so distant fired a quick burst, but no bullets came our way. A high, bare field of short grass stretched away upward to the left into the dawn, downward to the right into the darkness.

We followed the rails of a narrow-gauge railroad. At places they were spread wide or completely broken where a shell had burst upon them. As the light grew, other shell holes became visible. The plain was dotted

with them. The soil was hard-packed and the shells had been small ones, so the holes were not big enough to give shelter if shelter should be needed. About many of the holes lay bodies; some French, some German. The French bodies had been arranged, feet together, hands folded, and a coat thrown over the face. The German bodies lay contorted as they had died.

Six o'clock came. There was a half-light in which faces could be recognized. Our barrage began.

Far away to the right in the succession of valleys, now barely seen, the flashes of the guns leapt out. The sound from them swept toward us over the ground. The sound of the shells passing overhead formed a solid, invisible dome. The sound filled the air. It seemed as though one could reach out and touch sound, pull it away from one's head, butt one's helmet against it.

'That's the medicine,' said some one. A few smiled. A demonstration like that would make easier whatever lay ahead of us.

The edge of a small pine wood came in sight. A blast of air, a blow of sound that for an instant drowned out the torrent over our heads, bowled into us and made us lose our stride. Beyond the trees a huge tower of smoke darted up. It halted. From it sprang another tower that heightened slowly, turning to pearl as the rising sun struck it. A German ammunition dump had been exploded by the bombardment.

Machine guns fired so near that every burst made us wince.

Ahead I saw the column break up. At the edge of the woods was a tangle of barbed wire on corkscrew stakes leaning hither and yon. On our side of it the battalion was forming to attack. The major and

Thompson were standing face to face and shouting and waving their arms.

I approached Thompson.

'Squad columns. The Ninth's ahead,' were all his instructions.

There was a turmoil as sergeants and lieutenants rushed about to each corporal. The whole battalion was present, it seemed to me, in the small space of an acre or so. Every one shouted. Hardly any one made himself heard. Pushing men into place, leaving men to follow the example of the others about them, was the only way to get order.

We got some order. Each corporal knelt with his men behind him in single file. Each officer or platoon sergeant knelt in place with his runners near by.

The clatter of the machine guns grew more rapid. It was six-thirty!

CHAPTER XVII

THE FIRST MORNING OVER

THE columns nearest the wire stood up and walked forward. Of course I knew that one does not sprint into a modern battle or jump at the 'jump-off,' but I couldn't throw off the feeling that walking with no enemy in sight was too prosaic to be a battle.

My own columns rose and followed those of Given's platoon, which was just ahead. The barbed wire was in such bad repair that we climbed over it without trouble. We passed through a fringe of pines and came out on top of a hill. Just at my side, as we halted for a moment, was the wreckage of a German airplane. The engine was driven into the ground. The body of the machine still smoldered. The silver wing tips and tail, each marked with a black cross, that had escaped the flames, lay on edge as if struggling to rise from the wreckage that held them down.

The valley was filled with smoke. Smoke moved slowly across the whole scene. It might have been mist rising in a river valley so soft did it look, so beautiful where the sun, that had now just appeared, turned it to white and pink. The cloud still billowed up from the site of the explosion.

Another explosion drove a wave of air against us. This was no peaceful river valley. The dome of sound from the barrage still covered us. I kept looking to see it. It must be metallic. Could I not throw a stone against it? I coughed and my eyes ran. The stinging, pungent odor of burnt high explosives that emanates from bursting shells was almost stifling. I had never

before encountered it so strong. It would drown the odor of poison gas. I kept wondering — though I knew — if it were not poison gas.

The men ahead moved on. My columns followed. At the foot of the slope was a shell crater as large as the shed for a merry-go-round turned upside down. In it was a doctor with a Red Cross brassard, a badly wounded man on whom he was working, and a pile of splints, shell-wound dressings, and stretchers.

I would remember that spot in case any one else should ask me for a dressing-station.

We plunged into a growth of pine so thick that one had to force branches apart. The columns were now well spread out and I was afraid the elements of the platoon would become separated in the tangle. There was nothing to do but to keep the direction and go on. A light space showed. It was where a shell, such as had made the dressing-station, had fallen. Whole trees were gone. The white ends of the torn branches on the trees that walled the cleared circle seemed to point accusingly at the wreckage. A near-by tree was half-severed where a piece of flying metal had struck it. I shivered.

We came out of the woods and I saw that my fear about the squads getting lost was unfounded.

Ahead of us stretched a plain. The brown grass was beaten down by the weather. Far across it rose a low hill, the flanks of which were covered with pine, but the center bare. — Was this a battle? It looked like a maneuver. The barrage had stopped and there was quiet broken only by occasional shells that fell far off, or by bursts from invisible machine guns.

Everything seemed orderly. My own platoon was in good trim. Sergeant Morgan and Backell, his

runner, marked the center of the front wave. Sixty feet to his right walked one squad column. Sixty feet to his left walked another. To their left was a third. A hundred feet behind him I walked with Daly and McQuire. A hundred feet behind us came the second wave of the platoon; four squad columns, side to side, sixty feet apart. The arrangement was such that one shell burst would, at the worst, destroy only a single squad. Officers and non-coms were continually busy trying to keep the men from grouping closely.

Given's platoon, similarly arranged, was ahead. Rausch's was to his right; Yakely's was to my right. Thompson walked in the center of the company. 'K' Company, in just the same formation, was on our left; behind it was 'L,' behind us was 'M.' That made the battalion. Behind, still in the woods, was another battalion of our regiment. Ahead of us was a third. Ahead of that was the whole of the 9th Infantry. Everything was orderly. The whole picture was visible at once.

As we went on, very slowly, so as not to catch up with and crowd the men ahead, the illusion that it was merely an exercise grew. The men ahead halted. We halted. They moved. We moved. There seemed to be no resistance nor destruction here.

Then movement stopped everywhere. Men lay flat. Though all was calm enough, no one wanted to take any chances if shooting should start. Daly, McQuire, and I ran to a shallow trench that cut across the field near us. I knelt beside a man who was already there and turned to speak to Daly.

We waited. By way of being sociable I said something to the man on my left. He did not answer. I tried something else, for he had not heard. Again he said nothing. Perhaps he was a foreigner. I leaned

close to him and spoke. Then I looked at his face. It was green. Through his forehead was a bullet hole! There he knelt, dead, with his eyes open and his hand on the rifle that lay on the low parapet in front of him.

It was not a maneuver, after all!

Daly leaned over and took the entrenching shovel from the man's pack. He had none of his own. The act was a wise one. I looked off to the left and saw five other immovable figures. On their shoulders were insignia of the 9th Infantry.

'Any one who hasn't a tool had better get one,' I shouted to the men nearest me. Several did so. Karsanov, one of my stretcher bearers, came over from a distance and gathered up the first-aid packets from the men's belts.

We started on again, slowly. The Germans began shelling aimlessly. The missiles, which came one every minute or so, were, I think, 155's. They made a black burst that showered earth as high as the tops of the small pines. They tore a hole that would shelter four men.

I saw two columns going side by side up the hill half a mile away. A fountain of black towered between them. The columns bulged just as the rails of the narrow-gauge had bulged. The smoke hid them for an instant and then cleared. One figure in each column struggled erect and staggered to the side. Two other figures raised their shoulders and fought like mashed ants to drag their useless legs free of the ground. Some of the figures were gone — destroyed. Most lay still — dead rags in the dead grass.

Out of the pine woods sounded a crash of limbs; a tree fell; a geyser of branches erupted and settled back; four or five fragments, twanging like vicious discord-

ant tuning-forks, went by. But they did not go by every one. A fellow on the right of my platoon knelt suddenly and grabbed his leg. A fragment had torn through his calf. Karsanov ran to him and began to unwrap his puttee. As I hurried toward him, I saw relief coming. A group of Germans, smiling broadly, ludicrous in their mashed-down skull caps, light green blouses, and shapeless green pants, was being led to the rear. Two carried a stretcher on which an American, naked below the waist and torn in a ghastly fashion, lay breathing with a harsh sound that was audible even above the many noises of the advance.

'*Gehst daruber!*' I shouted at the Germans nearest me and pointed to my wounded platoon-mate. Two stopped smiling and started toward him. Evidently anything that delayed their progress to the rear was unpleasant.

'Hi! Come back!' yelled the single American who was escorting the twenty. They turned.

'Go on over!' I ordered. They wavered.

'Come here!' countered their owner. They looked three ways at once, toward me, toward him, and toward the front — mostly toward the front.

Just then I saw the injured man stand up and start hobbling back unaided.

I gave up the argument. They weren't my Germans after all. The group smiled again. 'Get goin',' said the boss.

We plodded up the hill where the big shell had wiped out the two columns. It was quiet there now, but at the crest we looked into a valley where things were happening aplenty. We scattered from platoon columns into deployed lines — eighteen men abreast with some twenty feet of space between each. To

the left was a hill slope honeycombed with dugout entrances. Earth and timbers were flying continuously there — twenty or more shell bursts at a time. Our advance had cut a wedge into the German lines and these dugouts were part of the captured area. The German gunners were seeing to it that the dugouts should be of no use to us. No wonder that the prisoners wanted to get out of the way! Ahead were woods — woods in which machine guns and rifles answered each other. There was not a German to be seen. That is, not a live one. Here and there lay Germans and Americans, barely moving and some who did not move.

Quantities of the American rifles and the French Chauchat automatic rifles that we carried were scattered about. The 9th must have run into some hand-to-hand fighting at that spot.

'Let's get some new rifles!' I shouted to my automatic rifle men. We threw away our old guns and picked up the new ones we found. A platoon was entitled to four. I had had only three, but in a minute I had five dandies. We tried them out by shooting bursts into the air. We loaded up with extra sacks of the semi-circular ammunition clips. I picked up a rifle and two more clips for my automatic pistol. A loaf of bread lying on the ground reminded me that I was hungry and I grabbed it up, took a bite, and tossed it to the man nearest me.

There was no metal flying in our vicinity and we moved rapidly toward the bottom of the valley. Colonel Stone, who had replaced Colonel Malone as regimental commander, hurried through the platoon. At the foot of the slope we passed him. He had been often in sight during the morning.

'That's the stuff!' was the comment whenever his

white hair and florid face were seen. 'He's no swivel-chair artist. Gets right into things!' His being there was most heartening, though for a while it kept me worried for fear I should make some mistake that would attract his attention. The parade-ground state of mind is hard to get over. The habit of being in awe of a person does stick. Drill is some good after all.

On the up slope was a camp, left by some of the Germans, occupied by others — some twenty not-yet-stiffened bodies. The lath and tar-paper shacks with stoves, porches, glass windows, and tin cans with flowers growing in them, looked comfortable and invited a halt. But the invitation was not heeded. The lines ahead were going fast now, and so were we. I saw a big, long-handled shovel standing in a garden patch and grabbed it up. I had not yet come upon an entrenching shovel. The rifle I had carried for the last half-mile was now an extra and I threw it away.

We bucked heads down through a thicket of pines, jumped into and out of a deep trench, partly cemented, in which were many bodies both Boche and American, and crossed a road. We came to a clearing that sloped away uphill to the right like an avenue cut through the trees. But the avenue was covered with craters where shells had tossed up the white chalk subsoil that gleamed doubly white in contrast to the brown grass. It was like the surface of the moon.

We entered another thicket. We came to another clearing. No craters here, but a heavy band of barbed wire. Somewhere at the top of the slope a light artillery piece was hidden. It was shooting point-blank down the clearing. Whizz-bangs timed to burst in the air. There would be a swish and a boop! The shell would travel by, waist-high, and burst without strik-

ing the ground. The crowd halted in the woods. The bursts seemed to be far enough down the hill so that we could try to get by under the course of the shells themselves. We ducked low, ran for it, floundered through and over the wire, and into the next woods. No one was hit.

We jumped into the bottom of a deep, wide trench that, though badly weather-worn, was imposing. We clambered up the far side; ran through more trees; crossed a hard-paved road along which bullets were zipping; flung up our hands as we broke through another screen of trees, and came out into a huge, totally empty clearing. What had become of all the men who had been ahead of us? Some might be in the woods a quarter of a mile down the field. Some we had passed through. We halted. 'They're held up,' was the word. Where it came from I didn't know. But it sounded reasonable and the machine-gun fire in the woods was most lively.

We sprawled on the ground and in the few shell holes there. Great black cracks in the hard earth extended away from each. They looked exactly like the cracks that one sees in pictures of cities that have been destroyed by earthquakes. The edges of the craters bulged upward. In some places there were mounds, cracked this way and that, where shells had burst so far below ground that they had not made craters. Evidently the Boches had been using delayed fuses there.

For half an hour we lay there and nothing happened. No one came up. No one went back. 'We've come ahead too far.' — 'We'll be cut off.' — 'It's hot here.' — 'We'll be fried to death in this sun when we might be in the woods.' — 'Wow! For a drink!' — So went the comment.

Three little tanks — a steel tower on a mottled sea turtle with thundering belts instead of flippers — hitched their way out of the woods and wabbled across the field. A shell — the only one that had interrupted the chorus of machine guns during the whole half-hour — arrived, surprisingly without any warning whistle and landed on one of the turtles which promptly turned half-round in a surprised fashion and, spouting smoke through eyes and tail, came to a permanent stop. No one got out. The other turtle shuffled once round its fellow and then went on to the edge of the woods, where it flopped down into a trench, fell over on the side and lay, as it were, kicking, the upraised belt lumbering round ineffectually and eventually slowing and stopping. No one got out. The third went on into the woods, its machine gun and one-pound cannon in intermittent action.

'Fine work,' said some one. 'Just like the Frogs. They were supposed to go ahead of us to mash down the wire and here they are half an hour behind us in spite of the machinery, and no good when they get here.'

'Let's go back,' said some one else.

'Let's stay here,' said I. 'We're here. We haven't got to our objective yet — it's supposed to be on the reverse of a hill, not on the front of it. We won't go back till Colonel Stone says to.'

Rausch, who was up the slope to my right, seemed to agree, though we did not get together. None of his crowd went back.

At last he shouted down, 'Let's send some one back to see what's up.'

'All right. Go to it.'

When it came right down to it, nobody appeared

anxious to cross that road or duck under the whizz-bangs in the clearing, but at last a man went from Rausch's platoon. While he was gone a man came from the major, whom I had not seen all the morning, with a written message to Rausch which caused him to wave to me and start back.

In the clearing where the white-chalk shell holes were thickest we found Thompson with Given's and Yakely's platoons. I popped into a hole big enough for Daly and myself with comfort. He set to work with my shovel to dig a cave in the side wall. I looked at my watch: eleven o'clock and no prospect of lunch. I pulled out my notebook and, going round to the squad leaders, made a list of all the men who were missing. It proved that six were gone. All could be accounted for as slightly wounded — some one had seen each one go. Hardly was I back in my hole when Thompson sent a runner saying that regimental headquarters wanted a list of casualties.

I gave the runner a duplicate of my list and looked up. Regimental headquarters was going to occupy the clearing itself. Colonel Stone and his staff, all in their long overcoats with insignia visible, stepped out of the woods and wedged themselves into a narrow, shallow trench through the center of which ran a dozen colored telephone wires strung on little poles. It was a tight fit.

Corporal Long, a pleasant, serious, freckled-faced fellow of about my own age, came to me, at the insistence of a pal who was still urging him, to have me decide what had better be done about his shoulder which had been dislocated by a flying fragment earlier in the morning.

'It hurts like all aboard,' he said. 'But it don't do any harm 'cause there's no hole.'

U.S. Official Drawing

TANKS LIKE THOSE DESCRIBED IN THE TEXT

The machine guns are shown, but not the one-pound cannon

'No,' said his friend. 'But he can't move his arm and it's swelling badly.'

I agreed with the friend that Long ought to go back and directed him to the dressing-station in the shell hole.

Then I set about helping Daly with the hole and soon found that we should have done better if we had started in untouched soil instead of in a shell crater. All the soil near the crater had been so loosened up by the force of the explosion that it would not stand at all, but fell back almost as fast as it was shoveled out.

An airplane dragging a long streamer of cloth came up the clearing, low — lower than the tops of the trees. High up four Boche planes arrived at almost the same moment. Evidently we were not going to be left in peace too long. The Boches came lower and the French plane went off to the rear. The Boches began with their machine guns, first one and then the other firing short and long bursts systematically as if sending telegraph messages. I think they were — and at the same time they were peppering a mile of territory with bullets. We became more interested in our digging.

That went on for some time; the Boches going off for short intervals and the French plane returning, the Boches coming back and the French plane going off in a hurry and keeping low enough to be pretty well out of sight from above.

There was no disputing the air. The Boches had it. Jeers greeted the French plane whenever it arrived.

Soon the value of having the air became apparent. Shells began to arrive from over the hill above. The first ones fell on the slope below us. It seemed as though a few signal bursts of firing from the Boche planes corrected that. The next ones fell among the

khaki-filled shell holes in the clearing and in the equally swarming woods. Nobody was hurt in half an hour of shelling, but every one shrank with an 'is-this-one-mine' feeling at every scream of a newly arriving shell.

Men began going back down the slope with dozens of empty, clattering canteens to be filled at a well some one had found. Some came to my hole to ask permission. I handed over my canteen to one.

At a quarter to one, Thompson's runner brought word that we were to start at one; that we were to 'leap-frog' the 9th and lead the attack. 'M' and 'L' Companies would be ahead, 'I' and 'K' behind. The rest of the 23d would follow.

Having been the rearmost battalion in the morning, it was proper that we should be the foremost in the afternoon.

Fifteen minutes to get ready and no getting ready to do! There was nothing for me but to pass the word on to the platoon and wonder whether the men who had gone to fill their canteens would get back on time. I wanted my canteen and I wanted my platoon.

CHAPTER XVIII

BAD MINUTES

'LEAP-FROGGING' an outfit is by no means the spectacular feat that the name seems to indicate — at least not when the outfit is one of your own. It consists simply of walking through it and taking the lead.

At one o'clock sharp, our squad columns started up the hill and found that the rear units of the 9th, whose whereabouts we had not known for some hours, were just on the crest. My group had barely reached the crest when the canteen-carriers came running up and joined us.

We crossed a road to the left; we crossed another to the right. There was no firing. We plunged into thick birch woods and down into a ravine where ran an old dried-mud road. The slope of the ravine was riddled with shelter holes — 'fox holes,' they were called — and swarmed with men of the 9th, many dead, the rest more beaten out than any men I had yet seen. The faces of the living were gray, just a shade off the green of those who were dead. Their eyes seemed to stare, though their lids were heavy. Their shoulders were hunched in a permanent cringe as though they heard shells coming even in the silence. They passed hardly a word with us. We could not ask questions of men with faces like that. They had run into *It* — whatever *It* had been.

The dead crouched and cringed in the same positions as the living, but their faces were untroubled.

It was a hard scrabble up that bank. At the top the woods were so dense that the squad columns straggled out — each man falling well behind to keep from being

slapped by the spring-back of the branches where the leaders pushed through.

For five minutes, ten, I was alone except for the noise of men smashing through the brush. Each of my fellows must have been equally alone. I went through two tiny clearings that were marked as Boche artillery emplacements by the piles of straw and loaded shells in the wicker baskets that lay all about.

We got to the bottom of a steep slope and came out into a clearing edged with sweet fern, just like the clearing in the woods at home. But — at the instant we came out several shells came in. The silver observation balloon above the trees a mile away had its eyes on us.

At the far side of the clearing was a field gun and caisson. A group of Boches were forcing a harnessed team against the pole and hitching up. They struggled frantically, got the horses in place, slewed the gun and caisson round as sharply as though it were nothing more than a boy's coaster, and streaked off across the field and away through the trees.

We crossed the clearing still in our squad column formation. We ploughed through a band of white birch. There was a cozy tar-paper shack hidden there. Corporal Steele went in and filled his canteen in the water-barrel. I dissuaded others from following him. The water might be poisoned, and we must not stop.

We entered another and smaller clearing. There we ran into *It*. Perhaps not the same *It* that the 9th had seen, but nevertheless *It*.

The balloon was watching. As we emerged — when we were all in the clearing — some battery not so far away dumped all its stuff onto us at once: Awful trench mortar shells — blunt-nosed things that

U.S. Official Drawing

A FINE BUNCH OF 'FOX HOLES'

The holes described in the text were like these in construction, but in the open, away from any sheltering trees

tumbled through the air with a thundering shudder and burst, a fifty-foot inverted pyramid of black death; awful things with wings as big as propeller blades that broke off and zinged through the air — swords screaming prophecy of the agony they carried; awful things that deafened with sound and smothered with biting pungency of burnt explosive. A salvo of six. We all fell flat. We rose. Another salvo. Several fragments struck me. We crawled. We ran. It was each man for himself. Two squads had gone.

In the woods it was quiet. There was nothing but machine-gun bullets there — lots of them.

An old grass-grown trench, not more than two feet deep, sheltered nearly all who had crossed the clearing. I stood erect behind an oak. There was no more room in that trench.

Sergeant Beaudry, the conceited little fellow whom I knew when I had the second platoon, lay below me, his head drooped forward, his eyes closed.

'He's out. Got a bullet in the chest after dodgin' *that!*' said the man next him.

I felt mean. He was shot — probably dying — it seemed low to have ever agreed in disparaging or laughing at him behind his back. Everybody there was a man — though he might be a boy as well.

It was good just to rest for five minutes; to keep down and let the bullets go by and hope that no shelling would start.

But we were not there to rest. We could not let that gun hold us up indefinitely. I crawled to where Corporal Steele crouched and argued with him about the chances of his taking an automatic rifle and sneaking up on the gun outside its field of fire while we kept it occupied on the front.

Before he was ready to go, though, the fire stopped. I looked through the trees and down the clearing. 'M' Company was crossing, apparently outside the gun's field of fire, and the gunners had withdrawn.

We jumped up and went on. There was no staying behind to help or carry the wounded. There would have been no one to go ahead if that had been done.

Again the balloon could see us. Again the artillery opened up, though this time they used only high-explosive shells, not the dragons from the trench mortars. Swihart, not far from me, stumbled and went on, a neat red hole in his face just below his ear. There came a burst very close by. I dropped instantly.

It must have been the fastest drop I had made yet.

'Did it get you, lieutenant?' some one asked.

'No! Just ducking.'

I was up again.

Another burst, farther away. The fragments went whining off, each one at a different pitch of sound. One struck on my whistle that dangled from my left breast-pocket, nicked it, and fell at my feet. I stooped to pick it up, but dropped it, for it was fiery hot.

The smoke of the burst cleared. A man rolled out from under the cloud, dead, but writhing, and burst into green and yellow flames. The incendiary grenade that he had been carrying had been hit.

We came to a dugout entrance. 'Give me a grenade, some one!' I shouted.

Grenades were scarce, though nearly every one had had them the night before, and there had been no occasion to use them. Every one was afraid of being hit on the grenade, and killed, as the man with the incendiary had been killed, instead of being merely wounded.

Finally I got one and went to the head of the dugout stairs. In one hand I held my pistol; in the other, the grenade with the pin pulled — ready to burst six seconds after it should be thrown.

'*Heraus!*' I called. '*Komme heraus!*'

Nobody came. I doubt if there was any one there. Nevertheless, I threw my grenade into the hole. Its explosion was muffled. Gray smoke curled up.

We went on into the edge of a group of pines. I tossed my raincoat, which had been dangling from my pistol belt all day, into one of the trees. I couldn't be bothered with that any more. We might yet have some hand-to-hand work. At a road I found Thompson, Rausch, and Given. There was no firing now.

'Let's dig in here,' said Thompson. 'This is our objective.'

I shouted the word round to my crowd and pointed out the spot where each man should make his individual hole. Eventually, perhaps, the holes would be connected to form a trench. It was important that they should be roughly on a line and not too close together.

We had been digging for about ten minutes, and I had got all the turf away from my spot, when Thompson received some message from battalion headquarters or another company — I don't know which —that we should move back into the shallow trench where the Boches with the machine gun had been.

There was plenty of cursing at leaving the holes so well begun — but we went.

About three years before the trench had been a good one. It was laid out, one long succession of traverses. But it had not been kept up. The revetting had rotted. The sand had fallen in. The trench was nothing but a crude ditch, three feet deep, that began nowhere and

ended nowhere out in an open field. It was a poor trench, but right then it was a palace — no, a dugout — compared to the holes we had been digging around the pine roots. In one end of it lay the big Boche machine gun overturned and jammed into the dirt. A half-spent belt of cartridges lay beside it, and there was an unopened belt box. The top of the firing mechanism had been bent over too far so that the whole thing was useless, and the works were filled with sand. The barrel and water-jacket were still hot. Fritz had made sure that we should not fire those remaining cartridges against him.

I saw that there were but two men in each traverse — it would not do, even now, to bunch together — and then threw myself down to rest, as we all did. The sun went down over the big hill whose spur we had crossed and from which we had descended. The tremendous tapering shadows of the pine tops reached out along the grass. Our company and 'M' Company were alone in the trench. A few — a very few — khaki figures moved about in the edge of the woods where we had been held up. A few figures lay contorted and quiet in the grass. We seemed to be out of touch with every one and everything — off the earth, forgotten.

An evening star showed. The sky became a sunset green. Evening quiet fell. Only now and then a single rifle shot sounded somewhere among the pines behind us. The Boche balloon was down. There were no flares — no lights. It was getting dark and cold and damp. And we were alone — somewhere.

Rausch, Thompson, Given, and I got together for supper. I supplied two cans of beans, Rausch bread, Thompson cheese, and Given corned beef. The men

all dipped into their emergency rations of about the same sort.

Then I crawled back to my spot in the trench and got to work digging a recess under the sod. Before it was wholly dark I had a good one. It was an area about the size of a single-bed mattress, half hollowed out of the trench floor and half out of the wall.

I sat down and talked with various men as they crawled back and forth visiting. Swihart had gone off toward the rear. I was told that the man who had been burned was McQuire. Sergeant Morgan had been killed in the first big salvo where we had struck it worst. Snead — a little fellow who was, I think, not yet eighteen — had been struck in the stomach by the wing of a trench mortar shell and had suffered several hours, but was now dead. The man who told of him had just been back to the spot and had seen him die. Karsanov had been there giving what help he could. Snead's squad was all dead. Young's squad was all dead. Those salvos had ruined the platoon. Corporal Steele was my only remaining non-com. I tried checking off the names in my notebook, though it was too dark.

When it was wholly dark I went up and down the trench arranging watches. Each man was told how long he should watch and whom he should waken.

Already it was a struggle to stay awake. I crawled into my hole with Daly on one side and Lynch — an old-timer — on the other. Lynch had an overcoat which he took off and put endwise across the shoulders of all three. We rolled together and locked arms to keep warm. October nights are cold.

At hourly intervals I was wakened as I had wanted to be, and crawled up and down the trench seeing that

the watch had been properly changed. I was so sleepy that I hardly remember what I saw: the men in the trench, blackness, one bright star above the pines. Each time I went back to Daly and Lynch, or whichever of them was not on duty, and rolled heavily into the warm spot.

It was seven o'clock before I was fully awake. There was nothing to do but finish that list of casualties and to enlarge the hole. I had a little water in my canteen, but nothing to eat. The others were equally well off. Fortunately I was not particularly hungry. I should not be until I got thoroughly warm. I saved the water for another time.

Thompson sent a volunteer across the clearing to where we had seen the figures the night before. The man reported that it was 'K' Company and that it was more alone than we. Later we discovered some Marines not very far away behind us. Apparently we were at the point of a badly formed salient and might easily be cut off. The Marines were in touch with the rear and said we should stay where we were. Later 'K' moved back and 'L' came from somewhere and dug in behind us.

When the sun got well up the German observation balloon made its appearance a mile away. Simultaneously some twenty gray-clad Boches were seen walking about in a strangely casual fashion at the edge of the woods half a mile away across the fields. We watched them intently. Were they going to attack?

Now and then the quiet was broken by a single rifle shot in the rear or by bursts of a machine gun to the left. Later a machine gun that had not bothered before began shooting quite steadily and methodically across our field. The bullets traveled low, cutting through

the grass with a *chirrup-chirrup*, identically like that of a sparrow. The gun itself was a long way off and the sound of the firing was not particularly noticeable. But that *chirrup-chirrup* was nerve-tormenting. *Chirrup-chirrup*. It sounded so innocent. It was so deadly. A bean can on the parapet went spinning twenty feet. *Chirrup-chirrup*.

We lay quiet and began to scorch in the sun. Just a few hours before we had thought we should never be warm again. We were too tired to say much. The usual grouching and growling were not present.

I got out a post card and wrote a note home. Number 51 of my series. Then I went on scorching and listening. *Chirrup-chirrup*. I did not think much about the afternoon before.

Lynch talked about his experiences in the Philippines, about camp in Texas, about Soissons. He was genial and experienced. I began to wake up and feel better. *Chirrup-chirrup*.

I crawled over and had a chat with Thompson. I crawled back and organized the platoon. New corporals. New squads. Lynch as second in command to take my place if I should be hit. Steele to take his place if he should be hit. One of Steele's crowd to take his place. *Chirrup-chirrup*. Those pesky, deadly sparrows!

At noon one of Thompson's runners arrived at my hole with instructions: 'At one o'clock the whole second battalion and "K" and "L" Companies move forward over us. We follow them at one hundred yards. "M" Company is on our right. Your platoon is on the left of our second wave. The French are on the right of "M" Company. The Marines are on our left. "K" and "L" Companies will halt on the objective and we will join them and consolidate.'

CHAPTER XIX

BETWEEN BURSTS

I TOLD my corporals their part of the order and sat down in my hole to rest some more.

The move began as the order had said it would. At one o'clock the second battalion — Companies 'E,' 'F,' 'G,' and 'H' — came forward out of the woods that had looked so deserted and moved over us in waves. When it had passed, 'K' and 'L' Companies rose up out of their trenches and fox holes some two hundred yards behind us and came forward, walking leisurely. The twelve hundred men, widely separated in twelve long lines, one behind the other, moved undisturbed down the huge expanse of bare October fields that sloped away in front of us to the slight embankment of a narrow-gauge railway that the Boches had used to carry shells to their guns, and beyond that to the foot of a gentle rise, the crest of which was hidden by the grove of tall pines where we had seen the enemy that morning.

The balloon swayed quietly at the top of its mooring and looked on. There wasn't even the hum of a plane to break the calm of the sunlit day. The lines passed over us. We caught and tossed back the jokes they threw at us. Now that something was about to happen, we no longer felt tired and numbed.

When a hundred yards separated us from the last of their lines, Thompson stood up in his hole and beckoned forward with his mascot cane. The two companies — 'M' and 'I' — sprang up and formed four lines like those ahead. I took place midway be-

tween the rearmost two lines that my platoon formed.

We began walking in as leisurely a fashion as we had the noon before. Then things began to happen. Far off sounded a machine gun — *put-put-put-put* — *put-put-put-put* — dealing out death impersonally in bursts of four. *Chirrup-chirrup-chirrup-chirrup* answered the sparrows in the grass. More *put-puts* — snappy, waspish — sounded in a closer semicircle. The *chirrups* became more numerous. The observation balloon seemed to stop swaying — to focus its attention. Four dull thuds were heard far away. Four wailing whistles began to sound; they grew shriller and more shrill; they rose to one great shriek — a shriek that ended solidly *above* our foremost line in a clap like a lightning stroke. From that almost visible sound sprang four white clouds that turned first yellow, then black in an instant. The eight lines dropped flat. That was shrapnel. Fragments of hot metal were raining down out of those clouds.

One man, two men, four, and more stood up and beckoned forward. The lines moved jerkily, each man crouching, ducking, and finding what cover he could. Man-made thunder-clouds burst incessantly all about at the height of the tree-tops ahead. We hadn't been treated to shrapnel before and this was a heavy dose. It wasn't like high explosive or gas; you couldn't hear the pieces coming or put on a mask against it. You couldn't seek shelter in a hole; it would burst over and into your hole. The lines halted — five minutes — ten.

As I lay on my side I put my long-handled shovel to use. It was a hard tool to wield in that position, but I scraped up a little pile of earth in front of my head. A bullet splunked into the mound scattering half of it away. But for the mound it would have splunked into

my steel helmet. I mentally shook hands with myself for having brought the shovel and set to work faster than ever. To the left some one was shot in the hand. To the front two men, wounded by shrapnel, screamed for the pain to be merciful.

I began to wonder if we should be able to go forward. Who would make the first move? It would take the will power of a thousand mornings' risings rolled into one.

Thompson had it. He got up with a visible effort. His move gave me courage. I got up.

Thompson blew his whistle and gestured with his cane; Rausch waved his rifle; I beckoned with my shovel.

'Don't wave that, lieutenant,' said Corporal Steele from behind. 'They'll pick you off.' I saw the point. The shovel would attract as much attention as a sword.

On we went, past men crawling to the rear, past men sprawled quiet. We entered a band of pine woods. There the effect of the shrapnel seemed lost. The *put-puts* of the machine guns were louder, sharper, almost deafening.

We crossed an open space. Bullets, invisible, *chir-ruped* through from both sides. I don't know why more men were not hit. The shower of shrapnel, threatening like the evil beast that every child fears in the dark, made me hunch my back and try to compress my shoulders beneath what I felt to be the shelter of my steel helmet.

In the second band of woods it was comparatively quiet again. The bullets didn't *chirrup* now; they cracked like a bull whip. We were nearer the guns. The rifles of the leading battalion were replying. A

brown rabbit, with white shanks flashing and white tail erect, burst out of the bushes at my feet and ran to the front as a squirrel runs before a motor car. I was half-running. Did he think I was chasing him? A white spot flashed into being on a tree ahead as a bullet sank into the trunk, splashing the black bark and showing the soft inner wood. The rabbit doubled up like a bucking horse and rose straight into the air almost before my eyes as if thrown by a released spring. Then he fell with a thud, limp and soft. A bullet had struck him. Nothing else that I saw impressed me so much with the suddenness, the force of a bullet.

A band of barbed wire woven about the trees at the edge of the woods forced us into single files that hastened, pushing, through the passages through which the Boche had apparently withdrawn so hurriedly that he had not had time to close them with the wire horses that stood ready at hand.

Another clearing, another band of woods, another clearing.

The lines were still fairly regular, but as we came out under the shrapnel-filled sky they lost their shape. The bullets were thicker there. Thompson, forty feet away, went down in a heap, sprang up, fell struggling. A little fellow — his runner — grabbed him under one arm and over the shoulder. He running and Thompson hopping, for Thompson had been hit twice, they made for the woods in the rear. Rausch fell heavily on his face. Others fell. Backell, my runner, who was almost at my hip, went down shrieking. We all went down. Bullets swept over us from the front and both sides and tore through the grass all about. I should have been fear-chilled then, if ever, but no — I was merely dazed and astounded.

Those of us that could got up. It was safer to stand and be shot in the legs than to lie and be shot in the body.

The men of the leading companies began to turn back out of the woods ahead. A captain whom I knew rushed by, his face covered with sweat, and shouted to me, 'They're getting wiped out in there.' A swarthy fellow came to the edge of the woods behind and shouted, 'The major says to come back.' That 'pulled the rip cord.' In an instant that open space was cleared of all who could move.

Once in the woods I called, '"I" Company gather here!' I blew my whistle and shouted repeatedly. My friend Steele and Sergeant Olsen of the fourth platoon joined me. We could assemble but a small group — twenty-five or so — and many of them were wounded. Those five words of the messenger had precipitated a move that if really ordered by the major was a 'withdrawal,' if the work of a spy was a 'retreat.'

Back in Lucey General Ely had told us of the Boche trick of sending men in American uniforms into the attacking lines to cause retreats in just that way. I had not recognized the messenger and was suspicious.

I hoped to hold what we had gained until I knew what was what. But after several minutes of terribly intense effort, rushing from man to man and imploring him to stay, I saw that we did not have enough to do the job.

'All right, go on back,' I said. Those who could went and took some of the wounded with them.

I dropped into a hole partly filled with fresh straw and covered with a sheet of iron where Sergeant Yakely, though shot in both feet and bleeding badly, was bandaging the arm of a friend.

Backell, still out in the open, was calling, 'Don't leave me! Don't leave me!' in a piteous, passionate, haunting voice. Olsen, from the next hole, called cheerily to me, 'Let's go get him, lieutenant.'

'All right.'

I could not have dared it unless some one besides myself made the suggestion.

We went to the edge of the trees. Backell was some thirty feet out in the clearing across which bullets were sweeping from the right.

'How'll we do it?'

'There's a blanket.' We picked up a German blanket that lay in the brush near by. We dropped off our pistol belts and laid aside our helmets. We wanted the machine gunners, who could see us and whom we could not see, to be perfectly clear on the point that this time we were stretcher-bearers, not attackers.

Out we crawled. Should we be shot? I felt the back of my neck quiver and tighten as if an axe were about to fall on it. Two steps — the fire continued, three — it stopped. There was utter silence. Not one of the many figures that lay there in the grass stirred. We were alone in the presence of our invisible enemies — gentlemen, this time — who did not shoot. We stood up and went to Backell. His automatic cry was not even interrupted by his screams as we put him on the blanket.

Back in the shelter of the woods we laid him in the bottom of one of those fox holes like Yakely's, where a Boche must have been so comfortable the night before. Outside in the clearing the stream of bullets had resumed. We took the first-aid packets from two bodies and, with Backell's own, made a bandage about his thigh that was almost drilled through by a bullet. I

could see the pointed thing just inside his flesh. We smashed the slats out of a fresh new porch chair that we found near by (don't ask me how it got there), pulled the screws out, and made splints that we bound on with his own spiral puttees. We covered Backell, who was cold, cold — oh, so cold — with four overcoats that we picked up. We gave him all the water in our canteens and then filled them from other canteens whose owners were quiet.

'Shall we see if Lieutenant Rausch is alive?' said Olsen.

'Yes! If the Boches will let us.' I was quite confident that time.

The Boches did let us. Rausch lay on his side, his blue eyes open and looking out clear but vacant from within white lids, his rifle in a hand that was forever stilled; I looked, but I felt no sorrow. Not one of the bodies shocked me. The men they had been were not there. I felt that strongly. It was the wounded fellows who had to stay in the same small body with more than a mountain of agony that made me recoil.

'He was a fine man,' said Olsen. 'He said something when he fell, but I couldn't understand it. I think he died right away.'

Back at Songy, Rausch had had a hunch that he would 'get his' that time. He had been pale and gloomy. He had told us the names of the relatives to whom his souvenirs were to go. Gerow, who had stayed behind, and so was most likely to be able was to deliver them.

I unbuttoned Rausch's overcoat and blouse and the two shirts he wore because he did not want to lose them, and hunted through his pockets for the photographs he had carried and had wanted sent home, and

for letters, wallet, and watch. His nephew namesake was to have the watch. The fatal bullet had struck it! It had stopped at twenty minutes of four. One o'clock to twenty minutes of four! Nearly three hours! I couldn't believe that so much time had passed. But I didn't stop to account for it. I selected Rausch's officer's identification card with his photograph from among the papers I had found and put it back in an inner pocket which I buttoned. I undid his shirt to see if his identification tags were there. They were — and near the spot where a second bullet had struck him after he had fallen.

We left Rausch where he lay. As we reëntered the woods the firing across the clearing, that had stopped while we were in sight, started again. On our third trip out to see if any other of the still figures in the clearing were alive, it stopped once more.

We made a stretcher by buttoning two overcoats, turning them inside out and putting rifles with bayonets fixed and in the scabbard through the arms. I had learned the trick with staves and blouses as a Boy Scout. As we started to carry Backell to the rear, two sergeants from another company, that had also withdrawn, came up through the woods from the right and joined us in bearing the load that became almost unbearably heavy as we went on.

As we approached the shallow trench from which we had started at one o'clock and where our line had reformed after its withdrawal from the point of farthest advance, wounded men still lay about in the field. One of the men half-raised himself and staggered toward us. His eyes were open, but unseeing. The right front sergeant let go his part of the stretcher to help the fellow, who, it seemed from the way he bled as he moved, could not live many steps.

The weight of the stretcher seemed doubled. We barely staggered to the nearest machine gun that pointed our way, watching for a Boche counter-attack.

The gun crew didn't want any stretcher in their pit, but we were absolutely done up. We set it down, rested awhile, carried it back to a less crowded hole and left it, telling the fellows there to get medical help.

Once I was rid of the load my energy came back.

I forgot how tired I was. I felt as if nothing could touch me after my coming through that last hour unhurt. I felt happy, buoyant, energetic, ready to laugh and sing and shout.

'Let's find the company,' I said to Olsen.

We turned west and walked fast without trying to find cover, though every one else was well down. I couldn't be hit! I knew it.

'Say, that was a chance,' Olsen spoke.

'You bet! But we didn't get hit.'

'I mean of getting captured.'

I hadn't thought of that. We had been pretty much alone with the Boches — though we had not seen them.

'Hi! Lieutenant!' some one shouted from the trench at my feet. 'I thought you were dead!'

A man, black with dirt and unshaven, but smiling and biting off great white mouthfuls from the edge of a round loaf of bread smeared with grape jam, was the speaker. I couldn't help grinning. With that loaf held in both hands before his face he made a laughable picture. All down the trench the picture was duplicated. Bread and jam in cans happened to be all they had got from the pile of stuff that the ration carts had dumped by the roadside during the attack.

'I don't feel dead,' I answered.

'Hi!' shouted some one farther along. 'Here's the

lieutenant — I thought I saw you hanging on the wire!'

'It couldn't have been I,' was my answer.

'Hi! Lieutenant Given,' came a third cry. 'Here's Lieutenant Ranlett.'

Of the four officers who had gone in with the company, only Given and I had come through; Thompson did not get about from his wounds until after the armistice. We proceeded to dispute as to who should take command. I succeeded in convincing Given that he was the senior in date of commission — by three days.

Then I turned to eating. I opened a can of jam with a bayonet. I picked up a loaf of bread from the pile lying in the bottom of the trench, trimmed one edge with the bayonet, and poured on the jam. I grabbed the loaf of bread and bit in like a negro trying to tickle both ears with a slice of watermelon.

CHAPTER XX

ROUND AND ROUND

JUST as the sun went down behind the ridge a runner came from Colonel Stone, who was located in the edge of the woods not more than a hundred yards to the rear of the front line, and called the company commander for a conference. Given went.

His instructions were to wait until dark and then to carry the wounded from the first-aid post to the ambulance post at the top of the ridge and then join the regiment near by. He protested that the order was too big for one company. So did all the rest of us, but there was no help for it.

We went to the first-aid post, which was simply a big shell hole containing one doctor and two aids, a pile of bandages, and a half-dozen wounded men. Many more wounded men on stretchers and blankets lay all round on the grass outside.

The company was now so small that there were but two men to each fellow who had to be carried. Some of the wounded we lugged on stretchers, some on blankets, some in chairs made of hands. I collected four automatic rifles and slung them on my shoulders so that four men could be unhampered for stretcher-bearing.

Picking our way across that field filled with holes was hard work. The road was easier, for it shone white in the dark, but now our loads began to get horribly heavy. My shoulders and back burned with the weight of the seventeen-pound automatics. All of us had to stop every few yards to rest. Growls and curses were the only words spoken.

To make it worse three shells arrived simultaneously on the bank beside the road and now we had to walk in the gutter, close to the bank for shelter.

We came to a cart path. 'There's a dugout in there,' some one shouted.

We turned in. There was a small dugout. Quantities of wounded lay on the ground above it. I crowded down the steps. The room was lit by a single oil lantern hung from the ceiling. A reek of ether pushed out, drowning the smell of high explosive that filled the night air. Two doctors were operating.

'Get out!' one ordered.

'We've got to leave these men here!'

'Get out! Take 'em to the top of the ridge. Get out! No more room here.'

The crowd heard that.

Somehow we did get to the top of the ridge, but each step was an agony of effort, and shells were bursting among the trees; a shriek, a blinding spurt of fire, the *ping*-ing of flying fragments, human shrieks as the fragments struck in the dark.

At the top of the ridge was a much larger dressing-station — a German dugout in the side of the cut where the road went over — where Ford ambulances were calling at minute intervals. The deep gutter was filled with wounded lying and sitting.

The moon came out faintly through the clouds so that I could see what a crowd there was there.

'Ranlett!' some one called.

It was Thompson. 'Well, great!' I was tremendously pleased to see him sitting there, showing no sign of his hurt.

'Through the shoulder and through the leg,' he started out cheerily. Then his voice weakened a little.

'Fine stuff, boy. Take care of the company. It's a good one.'

My eyes moistened. He hated to go as badly as I hated to have him. I felt his praise and his pride for the company.

'You bet. So long!' I didn't want to say good-bye.

Given and I blew our whistles and with shouts of '"I" Company!' gathered our crowd, now minus the wounded and feeling able to move again. We formed in a wide-spaced column of twos and started back.

'Seen anything of the third battalion of the 23d?' we asked the military policeman who was directing the ambulances.

'"K" Company just went along.'

We asked the same of each person whom we met. Parts of every company in the regiment had apparently just gone along. We got down off the ridge. That didn't seem right, but still every one we met directed us back.

At a fork in the road we talked long with another M.P. We didn't want to lose the regiment or get too far away. He was positive that several of our companies had gone to the right.

On and on! Through Somme-Py, across desolate fields, past the very mine craters that had awed us three mornings before, into Suippes, that utter desert where every house was beaten into dust.

That was too far back! We would not go any farther.

We turned about and started toward the front again. Each step became harder and harder. All of us would have to have some rest. Half a mile nearer the front we found a big trench leading off to one side. We followed it. There was a huge dugout, but it was filled

with French. They suggested the trench as a place to sleep and we accepted the suggestion.

It was four o'clock and the sun would be coming soon. Given and I arranged fifteen-minute watches so that there would be some one to wake the crowd at six o'clock. We scattered, ten feet apart, along the bottom of that twelve-foot trench and flopped down, to go to sleep instantly.

At six we were under way for the front again, but saw no sign of the regiment. Near the spot where we had spent the day before the jump-off we saw a group of rolling kitchens with gray wood smoke curling out of the stovepipes and gray, meat-flavored steam drifting off the slum pans.

'Let's eat!' the crowd shouted.

We turned into the field — and surprise! The first kitchen was our own. About it was the part of our company that had been left in reserve. The sergeant got a meal ready in a hurry. While he was at work Olsen and I turned Rausch's things over to Gerow. Rausch had told him where to deliver them.

In half an hour we were fed and thoroughly happy physically. Given and I were worried about having got so far to the rear.

Elmore came with us and we hiked fast. Near Somme-Py an observation balloon nestled on the ground between a bluff and a row of trees. I had not seen one so close before and the thing amused me. It was a gigantic dun-colored football with an eye of concentric red, white, and blue and a massive excrescence — the stabilizing fins.

As we entered the town, which we now saw for the first time by daylight, we discerned it to be nothing but a wreck with only part of the church and part of the

roof of the railway station standing. The balloon began to ascend. I kept an eye on it. Suddenly the men at the winch reversed the action and began to pull the bag down. They wanted to hurry, but they couldn't, for speed would break the cable. They were like people in a dream, raving with activity and accomplishing nothing.

But why were they doing it? I could not see.

Then there was a burst of machine-gun fire overhead. We dove for the gutter. A plane appeared plunging nose downward, directly at the balloon, and shooting into it a continuous stream of incendiary bullets. A big black spot appeared at the head of the balloon over the eye. It spread. A red flame shot up. It swept over the whole bag. The two men from the basket jumped out and dove. Their parachutes snapped open very close to the ground. The balloon doubled up. The flames towered a hundred feet. The column of fire dropped with a rush, overtaking and falling on the parachutes and bearing them to the ground.

The plane recovered below the tree-tops, zoomed up, fired a burst at the road and at the crew at the winch, and hurtled away to the next balloon, high up and miles away. A myriad of machine guns opened fire after it, but it escaped. Whoever was under the shower of bullets must have had a hot time.

We jumped up and set off, now keeping single columns on the grass at either side of the road where we should be relatively inconspicuous from overhead.

The plane disappeared from our sight, but five minutes later the high-up balloon was seen to burn and fall. In another five minutes the next balloon to it suffered the same fate. And so did a fourth, which was nearly to the ground. That Boche was right in line for a medal and no mistake!

U.S. Official Drawing

A GERMAN PLANE (BELOW AT RIGHT), ATTACKING AN ALLIED OBSERVATION BALLOON, IS DESTROYED BY AN ALLIED PLANE

The fins on the tail of the balloon are to stabilize it and make it ride nose to the wind

The night before every one had known where the 23d was. This morning nobody did. But we stuck to the road.

Eventually we came to the top of the ridge and there realized that we were on the wrong road; that we had missed the turn somewhere. Two roads crossed the ridge. We were on the easterly instead of the westerly.

Remembering the observation balloon that the Boches kept aloft, we were not anxious to go over the front of the ridge unless we knew just where we ought to head for.

'It's only a short way across the fields to the other road,' volunteered one of the men.

'All right. You go ahead and find the way and come back and tell us.'

We waited in the woods.

Soon the man was back and we set out to cross the field a few at a time. No sooner were we under way than a number of shells came over. We got into the woods, crossed the very clearing where we had spent the noon hour of the first day of the attack, and found the wide, deep trench in the woods beyond.

'You stay here and I'll go down front to locate the regiment,' I said to Given. 'Then we can rejoin it after dark.'

I set out alone, keeping in the trees. Hardly had I got to the top of the ridge when a big flight of shells went plumping into the trench I had just left.

I passed the base of an observation tower that had been built by the Boches. I passed through a camp of tar-paper shacks where a lot of Germans had been overtaken by a hurricane bombardment. They lay about everywhere killed as they had started to run. They were in ghastly, horrible shape. Being alone, be-

ing calm, being relatively unhurried, I shuddered as I had not done at many equally gruesome sights during the days just past.

I pushed through thick woods, heading, I thought, for the spot where the company had spent the morning before. Every now and then a shell crashed into the trees on one side or the other, but I knew that was just shooting at random.

For half an hour I pushed on without seeing a living person. There was certainly a lovely hole in the line! I began to realize that I ought to have taken a companion. I began to wonder if I might not walk right into the Boche lines.

But no. I walked into the French lines. The French, we had been told, were to be on our right. Hitherto none of us had seen them.

I sat down in a shell hole with a corporal and his automatic-rifle squad and tried to find out where the Americans were. It was a struggle, like all my French conversations, but we made out. The Americans were somewhere over there to the left.

I walked due west for half a mile without seeing anyone. What a hole! If only the Boches had known about it!

Then I struck the narrow-gauge railroad near the spot where we had left Backell the afternoon before, found some Americans, and asked if the third battalion of the 23d was anywhere about. It was right in the very field where the machine-gun bullets *chirruped* so terribly. And they were still *chirruping*. I lay down and crawled to the spot where they told me the major was.

I found him sitting, very much exhausted and dishevelled, in a beautifully spacious fox hole that was al-

most a real shelter. His adjutant had another similar hole alongside.

I dropped in with the major and told him where 'I' Company had been and was.

As I was talking things began to happen. An attack started. Several Marine units came walking out of the woods and went on down the field just as we had done the afternoon before.

The major paled and flushed. He raised his head above the edge of the hole and began to shout.

'Go back! Damn it! You fools! Go back!! They'll begin shooting!!! You'll get us all killed!!!! Go back!!!!!'

The men grinned and didn't go back. The major had on neither his helmet nor his gas mask satchel. He looked neither commanding nor well.

He was right, however, about the shooting. The shells began to come in fast and the quiet fox holes weren't so safe as before.

Two shells that didn't make as much noise as most plopped into a fox hole near by.

'Gas!' came a single shout.

I made no move to put on my mask, because shouts of 'gas' were being raised every now and then as some one caught a particularly strong whiff of high explosive. But the shouts kept up. I looked out.

A brown cloud was curling up from the fox hole where the shells had landed. Three men in masks were struggling to pull two other men out of the hole.

'Gas' I shouted in turn, and jumped into my mask.

'Gas, gas, gas!' shrieked the major, madly picking the satchel of his mask up from the bottom of the hole and trying to get it adjusted.

'Gas, gas, gas, gas' — he kept it up in agony, breath-

ing gas at every shout and making no go at all of getting into his mask. He had no control of himself. The adjutant tumbled into the hole and we held the major with difficulty and adjusted his mask, though we couldn't get him to breathe right. He kept snatching off the nose-piece and shouting into the mask, the face of which heaved in and out and the eyes steamed over. At last we got him quiet. By that time the gas had gone. He was a wreck. The adjutant called in a bunch of men, sent for a stretcher, and ordered the major out.

I saw that if I wanted instructions I had come to the wrong place.

The attack had halted and the Marines had gone back. The machine-gun bullets still *chirruped.*

I crawled to my trench of a night and a morning. It was occupied by 'A' Company. I told the captain my story and asked if he would let us have the place after dark. He would let us have half of it. That was fair enough.

I started for the road over which we had carried the wounded the night before. The ration dump was just what the name implies — a dump. In the huge hole caused by the collapse of a dugout the ration wagons had deposited great heaps of bread and canned stuffs and dozens of marmite cans. Whoever could get there might have whatever he could carry away. There was no system, no issue.

The Boches had a machine gun trained on the road and an eye from aloft on the spot. There were more American bodies thereabouts than anywhere else, and now the place was deserted, in broad daylight, except for the dead. Looking back across the field that was filled with living men, I saw not a single one. They

were all below ground. Only the bodies of the dead were visible.

I crawled along the gutter and into the dump. The company might not have any evening meal. I would carry all I could to Given and Elmore and the rest. Two loaves of bread and four cans of jam was the limit.

Keeping in the edge of the woods I started to follow the road back to the hilltop. On the way I met part of the headquarters company and they reported having seen Given still in place where I had left him. They had been wandering all over the map, since last night, just as we had, looking for the regiment.

It was just growing dark when I jumped into the trench where I had left the company. It was empty!

CHAPTER XXI

ONE TOO MANY

WHEN I found the trench empty, my thoughts of Given were not at all pleasant. I was back right on time and at the appointed place and there was nobody round to profit by what I had found out or by my arrangement with the captain of 'A' Company.

Well! I should have to find the outfit in the dark.

I shouted, 'Hi! I've got some stuff to eat. Gather round!'

It worked. Two 'I' Company fellows, whose very awkward explanations seemed to show that they had voluntarily stayed behind when the company had moved off, appeared and told me that a heavy shelling had caused the outfit to get out of the trench and go back down the slope.

I passed round the bread and jam and two more men joined us.

We started off to find the company; going in the direction that all four insisted was right. Several other stragglers from different outfits, seeing the remaining loaf of bread under my arm, followed along.

Back and forth and round and round we went investigating every clump of trees and knoll and hollow. As we hunted the men talked. That shelling I had heard as I left the company had been bad. Elmore had been hit. Olsen had a mean one in the arm. Lots of others were shot up.

After midnight I decided that the search was useless. We came to a group of French *camions* and there

begged some of the hot coffee that was being served. After the coffee we begged a tarpaulin. Seven of us crawled under it, between a big pair of wheels, and slept.

As the sun got up we did likewise and bumped our heads on a huge gun. We had been sleeping under a 210! There would have been seven stone deaf and horribly frightened Americans if they had fired the thing during the night.

We had some more coffee on General Gouraud's Fourth French Army, of which we were a part, and then hurried toward the front. It was not more than fifteen minutes before we were near the fatal ration dump. A big dose of shells arrived. My six stragglers disappeared into holes. Nothing would get them out. I went on alone.

In the trench where I had talked with the captain of 'A' Company I found one man. He had been shot in the leg and was waiting for a good time to crawl out. From him I learned that the 9th and 23d had attacked at six-thirty and were 'up ahead.'

'I'll join them,' said I; 'but where's regimental headquarters? I might as well be useful and carry any messages they may have.'

He pointed out a spot in the edge of the woods far across the field of chirruping bullets.

I started to crawl to it. Halfway I dropped into a shell hole to rest. In it was a man who had been literally riddled with pieces of an exploding shell.

'Don't stay here, boy,' were his first words. 'You're well. You don't know what it is to be hit. Don't stay here, boy.'

I set out on a crawling expedition to all the bodies thereabouts for first-aid packets. Each packet con-

tained a pad and bandage enough for one small wound and a few safety-pins. Back in the hole again with quite a supply I got to work tying up the fellow's many wounds. My patient seemed to be all pain. He could tolerate being touched anywhere because nothing could make it worse.

'Give me a drink, boy.' He emptied my canteen.

'Don't stay here, boy. You'll be killed. Go back. Go back while you can. Leave me. Nobody can help me.'

I worked awhile.

'Give me a drink, boy.'

I started out of the hole to get a canteen as I had got bandages.

'Keep down, boy. For God's sake. You don't know how it feels to be hit.'

I got the canteen and finished bandaging him. He was weakening fast and getting cold. Four overcoats didn't keep him warm at all. I rounded up a stretcher and some carriers. We got across the field, somehow, without being hit and left the man at the dugout where the doctors had driven us away the night before.

Then I began to think of my intended stop at headquarters. I had been only too willing to delay to help the wounded man. It's easy enough to go into action the first time. It's the hardest thing I know of to go the second time — when you know what it's like — and to go alone. I hadn't meant to shirk, but I had been glad of an excuse. I must get over that!

At the ration dump I filled my canteen with hot coffee.

Another visitor protested at my taking so much.

'It's all right,' said I; 'I just poured a whole bottleful into a wounded fellow.'

He looked up, saw my shoulder bars, and started to apologize.

'Forget that,' I told him. 'I won't ring those in to help me get away with anything. This coffee's coming to me.'

Regimental headquarters was a shallow, inadequate hole that two men had been digging round the colonel and the officers who were with him. Just before I had got there a salvo of shells from the rear had landed directly on the spot and had knocked out most of the staff, who were even then being carried away.

'Find out what batt'ry did it!' shouted the colonel.

Some one pulled a dud out of the ground and rolled it gently toward him. Several gathered round and examined its markings. Then they carried it well away while the colonel began telephoning to the rear over the wires that the signal corps had just laid. He told every battery he could get enough to melt the wires.

I reported and asked if there was anything for me to take up front.

'No. But try battalion headquarters.'

I inquired of an enlisted man as to where the headquarters of the third battalion was.

'There's one of their runners,' he said. 'He's going there now. He'll show you.'

The man started *back* along the knee-deep trench that came to within ten yards of the colonel's hole. Back! It seemed odd that battalion headquarters should be to the rear of regimental, but I started.

A flash of terrific brilliancy! A world of globes of light — the kind you see when you clamp your lids too tightly — exploded and danced in front of me. I felt nothing. I heard nothing. But I flung up my arms to

ward off *something*. My knees doubled up. I could feel them going. I slumped face down in the trench.

'Are you alive, lieutenant?' said the runner hoarsely.

So that was what had happened! It hadn't occurred to me that I had been hit. I had heard no shell nor any explosion — but one had come and exploded.

'Yes.' I thought I was speaking firmly, but my voice came out weak. There seemed to be two of me. Number One was well and willing. Number Two was wounded and weak. Number One looked on at Number Two — though I was wholly blind — and tried to speak and act through him. Number Two obeyed either feebly or not at all and Number One was puzzled, astonished at every failure.

'Can you walk in?' said the runner, grabbing me under one arm and round the shoulders and raising me to my feet.

'Sure,' said Number One and took a step. 'No,' said Number Two, but the runner didn't hear him. Number One's step was a complete failure. My legs bent every which way and I flopped down in spite of the man's efforts to hold me.

'I'll get a stretcher,' he said. Then, to some fellows in a hole near by, 'Hi! Get out of there! Let me put the lieutenant in so's he won't get it again while we're after a stretcher.' He dragged me to a hole and put me in.

'Where am I hit?' I asked.

'In the head.' He took out my first-aid pack, tied the bandage round my head, and put my helmet on again. 'Be back soon.'

I felt round. I had the hole and the world all to myself. Hit in the head. I started to raise my hand to feel of my head. No, I didn't dare. I might find only

half a head. My hand wouldn't come that high, anyway. Half a head! I had better use my pistol before they got back. No. I saw my folks and Auburndale. If I wasn't going back, at least I'd die right.

That settled, I waited. I didn't think or feel. I just listened and waited.

Soon four fellows came with a stretcher and rolled me on. Off they started across the field. I could hear the bullets *chirrup* and an occasional shell. I knew just how that field looked.

'Wait till dark,' I said.

They didn't answer. Perhaps I hadn't spoken as loud as I had meant to. I couldn't seem to work it.

The stretcher seemed miles up in the air. They must have it shoulder-high. But, no, they couldn't.

At last we came to a first-aid post. It was a tar-paper shack that I had seen before. I didn't see it now. I heard Captain Doctor Martin's rich Southern accent.

A lieutenant doctor came to me and touched my bandage. 'It's all right,' he said. 'I'll leave it alone. What name and outfit?'

I pointed to my tag on my wrist. That was easier than talking. 'I'm writing your field dressing tag,' he said.

A shell landed near the shack. A fragment fell on my leg. I put out my hand to see if it had made a hole. No. But it burned my hand as I threw it off.

The lieutenant went on. 'They pinked three fellows that time. Doc Martin's sure hurrying things.'

I hear Martin shouting to the ambulance drivers. 'Here! Drive like blazes! Not so damn careful! Chuck 'em in! Got to get every one out of here. Jerry's going to clean this up in about two minutes.'

I don't believe I had been there five minutes before

it came my turn to go. The stretcher was lifted and shoved into an ambulance where it seemed to swing on suspension straps. I could hear the other three fellows groaning and trying to hold in.

As the Ford got under way and went dashing across the sod and the gutter to the road, I put my hands under my head and held it up off the canvas. It didn't hurt, but it might get hurt.

The car made great time over the crest of the ridge and into Somme-Py. There my stretcher was carried into what some one told me was a field hospital of tents. Oh, yes. I had seen it the morning before. Big brown tents down among the ruins back of the few standing fragments of the church.

Some one looked at my bandage. 'It's all right. I'll leave it alone and give you an A.T. shot.'

'What's that?' said Number One strongly. The words came out a bare murmur.

'Anti-tetanus serum. Everybody gets it even if he has only a scratch.'

I lay on the stretcher, felt the wind blowing through the tent. The place seemed huge and utterly empty. I thought about nothing and I slept.

It wasn't long before I was carried out and put in another and larger ambulance. We drove for a long time, and then the driver began inquiring, evidently of some French:

'*Où est le hôpital Américain? Hôpital Américain! Hôpital Américain.* — No. Dammit. Hospital American. — Where's it? *Hôpital Américain?*'

'Ah! *Oui. Hôpital Américain?*' Oh, yes. They got it at last and we went on faster than ever.

After a while we went through that performance once again. Then twice more. Plainly he was lost.

Finally we got to a hospital and were unloaded. But it wasn't an American hospital. Everybody spoke French. They asked me my name, rank, and outfit. I pointed to my tag. They carried me into a big room. It seemed big, the way the air moved there. One man pushed my eyelids apart and I could see faces and a bright light. The lids fell together as he released them. They X-rayed me and bandaged me.

Then I slept. Perhaps it was the next morning that I was fed and then put in another ambulance. I slept, to wake in another room where the moving of the air, as always, was the first thing that I noticed.

I moved my hand. A woman's voice spoke. 'Are you hungry? Could you eat a dropped egg?'

'You bet!' My voice really sounded like a voice that time.

I heard the water boiling and the cracking of the eggshell and became suddenly hungry, though before, for ever and ever so long, I hadn't remembered to be hungry.

She came and fed me, and as she did so asked questions. 'Where was my home?'

'Auburndale.'

'Come here, Miss Russell. Here's a fellow from Auburndale.' Miss Russell was from Somerville, another suburb of Boston. The speaker was from Malden, also close to home.

At that hospital I was X-rayed again and slept. A Red Cross officer arranged to telegraph home for me. I remember nothing else.

Several days later I was put aboard a French hospital train with French attendants and taken to Paris. There I slept and slept and slept. Occasionally

they fed me. Once they took me upstairs and X-rayed me again.

It was a day or so before any one tried opening my eyes. I couldn't open them myself. As the nurse held the lids apart I looked up and saw her hand, face, and the ceiling. But the lids fell together again. My eyes were horribly sensitive to light.

'Not very strong,' said the nurse.

'No, but I can see the Grand Canyon with them.'

I slept again. Now and then I said a few words to the fellows on either side. A woman of the Red Cross Home Communication Service came to ask if I wanted to have her write a letter home for me. I did, but hardly had I begun to dictate when a doctor came and pried my right eye open for a moment and told me that my left eye was useless, that I wouldn't see with it again.

I started the letter differently the second time.

'As Lincoln said, you cannot dodge all the shells all the time!'

The Red Cross visitor interrupted. 'Lincoln! Why, that's interesting. I'm Miss Stanton, a descendant of Lincoln's Secretary of War.' It was distinctly interesting. I didn't see Miss Stanton, but she sounded nice and was easy to dictate to.

I went on: 'After four days' dodging I failed to hear a high-explosive and allowed it to land in front of me with the result that a small piece got into my left eye. I cannot see with my left eye at present, but my right eye is good, although the lid muscles are weak so it is hard to keep it open. After a brief stay at two dressing-stations and two other hospitals, including a French one, I am now located in a very large hospital in the city where I had my last photograph taken.

I am receiving abundant and excellent care and getting everything I want to eat, including ice-cream! I've had several X-ray photos taken and been under ether once, but the offending piece of shell has not been removed. I expect the doctors are planning some method of attack. Although the wound pains barely any, I shall, of course, be glad to have it finally fixed up. I hope that my telegram reached you before any government communication reached you, so you did not worry unnecessarily. I was not knocked out or left lying around at all, but received very prompt attention.' — And more.

That letter was written on October 11th. We had jumped off on October 3d and I had been hit on October 6th. On October 13th I was up and about the hospital and wrote home by myself. Six days later I walked up L'Avenue de la Grande Armée and stood under the Arc de Triomphe.

Straight was killed on the morning of the first day at Blanc Mont. I heard that three months afterward. Perhaps he was one of the company in that very trench where I spoke to the fellow who did not answer.

THE END

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